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THE
L I F E
OF
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.
WITH
CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS
ON HIS WORKS.

BY ROBERT ANDERSON, M. D.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. & A. ARCH; AND FOR BELL & BRADFUTE,
AND J. MUNDELL & CO. EDINBURGH.

1795.

THE

LIFE

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SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

THE LIFE
OF
JOHNSON.

THE events of the life of JOHNSON, “ the brightest ornament of the eighteenth century,” who has written the lives of so many eminent persons, and so much enriched our national stock of criticism and biography, have been related by friend and foe, by panegyrists and satirical defamers, by the lovers of anecdote, and the followers of party, with a diligence of research, a minuteness of detail, a variety of illustration, and a felicity of description, unexampled in the records of literary biography.

Besides several flight sketches of his life, by unknown authors, taken, sometimes with a favourable, flattering pencil, sometimes in the broader style of caricature, which lie scattered in the periodical publications of the last ten years; voluminous biographical accounts of him have been given to the world by Thomas Tyers, Esq. Mrs. Piozzi, Dr. Towers, Sir John Hawkins, James Boswell, Esq. and Arthur Murphy, Esq. who were his most intimate friends, and wrote from personal knowledge. Their several publications, which place his character in very different, and often opposite points of light, by exhibiting a striking likeness of the features of his mind, which were strong and prominent, and by recording so considerable a portion of his wisdom and wit, have exquisitely gratified the lovers of literary anecdotes, and largely contributed to the instruction and entertainment of man-

kind. The publications of Mr. Tyers, Mrs. Piozzi, Dr. Towers, and Mr. Murphy, come under the description of “Biographical Sketches,” “Anecdotes,” and “Essays.” Those of Sir John Hawkins and Mr. Boswell are more elaborately composed, and entitle them to the exclusive appellation of his biographers.

On an attentive perusal, it will be found that the narrative of Sir John Hawkins contains a collection of curious anecdotes and observations, which few men but its author could have brought together; but a very small part of it relates to the person who is the subject of the work. He appears to be a worthy, and often a well-informed man, but he possesses neither animation nor correctness, expansion of intellect, nor elegance of taste. He writes without much feeling or sentiment; his work is heavy, cold, and prolix; but we discover in it many gleams of good sense,

and openings of humanity, sometimes checked by ignorance, and sometimes by prejudice.

The narrative of Mr. Boswell is written with more comprehension of mind, accuracy of intelligence, clearness of narration, and elegance of language; and is more strongly marked by the *desiderium charitatis*, which is the first feature of affectionate remembrance. He was peculiarly fitted for the task of recording the sayings and actions of this extraordinary man, by his assiduous attention. From the commencement of his acquaintance with him in 1763, he had the scheme of writing his life constantly in view; and continued his collections, with his approbation and assistance, with unwearied diligence, and meritorious perseverance, for upwards of twenty years. He gave a specimen of his being able to preserve his conversation, in an authentic and lively

manner, in his "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides," 8vo, 1786. His veneration and esteem for his friend, induced him, at a subsequent period, to go through the laborious task of digesting and arranging the immense mass of materials, which his own diligence, and the kindness of others, had furnished him, and of forming the history of his life ; which was published in 2 vols. 4to, 1791, and was received by the world with most extraordinary avidity.

Xenophon's *Memorabilia* of Socrates may possibly have suggested to Mr. Boswell the idea of preserving and giving to the world the *Memorabilia* of his venerable friend ; but he professes to have followed the model of Mason in his "Memoirs of Gray." He has, however, the advantage of Mason, in the quantity, variety, and richness of his materials. His work may be referred to that class of complements known by the name of "Books in *Ana.*" To com-

pare it with Monnoye's edition of the *Memagiana*, one of the most esteemed of these publications, would not be doing justice to it. The incidental *conversations* between so eminent an instructor of mankind, and his friends, the numerous body of *anecdotes*, literary and biographical, and the *letters* which are occasionally interspersed, and naturally introduced, in the narrative part of Mr. Boswell's ample performance, open and disclose to the eager curiosity of rational and laudable inquiry, an immense storehouse of mental treasure, which far exceeds, in merit and value, the voluminous collections of the wise and witty sayings of the learned and ingenious men of other nations. With some venial exceptions on the score of egotism and indiscriminate admiration, his work exhibits the most copious, interesting, and finished picture of the life and opinions of an eminent man, that was ever executed; and is

justly esteemed one of the most instructive and entertaining books in the English language.

The eccentricities of Mr. Boswell, it is useless to detail. They have already been the subject of ridicule in various different forms and publications, by men of superficial understanding, and ludicrous fancy. Many have supposed him to be a mere relater of the sayings of others; but he possessed considerable intellectual powers, for which he has not had sufficient credit. It is manifest to every reader of any discernment, that he could never have collected such a mass of information, and just observations on human life, as his very valuable work contains, without great strength of mind, and much various knowledge; as he never could have displayed his collections in so lively a manner, had he not possessed a very picturesque imagination, or, in other words,

had he not had a very happy turn for poetry, as well as for humour and for wit.

This lively and ingenious biographer, is now beyond the reach of praise or censure. He died at London, May 19, 1795, in the 55th year of his age. His death is an irreparable loss to English literature. He had many failings; and many virtues, and many amiable qualities, which predominated over the frailties incident to human nature. He will be long regretted by a wide circle of friends, to whom his good qualities and social talents always made his company a valuable accession.

The facts stated in the present account are chiefly taken from the narratives of Sir John Hawkins, and Mr. Boswell; with the addition of such particulars of the progress of his mind and fortunes, as the subsequent narrative of Mr. Murphy, and the most respectable periodical publications of the last ten years have supplied.

SAMUEL JOHNSON was born at Litchfield, in Staffordshire, September 7. 1709. His father, Michael Johnson, was a native of Cubley, in Derbyshire, of obscure extraction, who settled in Litchfield as a book-feller, and carried on that business at all the neighbouring towns on market days; but was so respectable as to be made one of the magistrates of that city. He was a man of a large and robust body, and of a strong and active mind; but was always subject to a morbid melancholy. He was a zealous high-church-man and Jacobite; though he reconciled himself by casuistical arguments of expediency and necessity, to take the oaths imposed by the prevailing power. He was a pretty good Latin scholar, and being a man of good sense and skill in his trade, he acquired a reasonable share of wealth, of which he afterwards lost the greatest part, by engaging, unsuccessfully, in the manufacture of parch-

ment. His mother, Sarah Ford, descended of an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire, was the sister of Dr. Joseph Ford, a physician of considerable eminence, and father of the famous Cornelius Ford, Chaplain to Lord Chesterfield, supposed to be the Parson in Hogarth's "Modern Midnight Conversation," a man of great parts, but of very profligate manners. She was a woman of distinguished understanding, prudence, and piety. They were well advanced in years when they married, and had only another child, named Nathaniel, who seems to have succeeded his father in his business; but died in 1737, in the 25th year of his age.

During the period of infancy, all children are prodigies of form and understanding to their parents. With a natural fondness, they exaggerate every symptom of sense into the perfection of wis-

dom, and describe every feature with an adventitious grace. If the object of their admiration should at more mature years become distinguished for excellence, it is hoped that we may believe wonders of the child, because we have seen greatness in the man. Hence, in our fondness for the marvellous, the traditions of the nursery, respecting such persons, are amplified beyond the bounds of credibility, and recited with all the confidence of truth.

Every great genius must begin with a prodigy ; and it is not to be supposed that Johnson should be without attestations of these miracles of early genius, which are believed by some to be as necessary to the attainment of future pre-eminence, as that fruits should be preceded by the blossom. Among other stories of his infant precocity generally circulated, and generally believed, we are told by Mrs. Piozzi, and Sir

John Hawkins, that, at the age of three years, he trod by accident upon one of a brood of eleven ducks, and killed it, and upon that occasion made the following verses :

Here lies good master duck,
Whom Samuel Johnson trod on ;
If it had liv'd, it had been *good luck*,
For then we'd had an *odd one*.

This prodigy is scarcely exceeded by the bees on Plato's lips, or the doves that covered the infant poet with leaves and flowers ; for how should a child of three years old make regular verses, and in alternate rhyme ? The internal evidence is sufficient to counterbalance any testimony that these verses could be the production of a child of such an early age. But, fortunately, credulity is relieved from the burden of doubt, by Johnson's having himself assured Mr. Boswell, that they were made by his father, who wished them to pass for his

son's. He added, " my father was a foolish old man, that is to say, foolish in talking of his children."

He derived from his parents, or from an unwholesome nurse, the distemper called the King's Evil. Jacobites at that time believed in the efficacy of the royal touch. His mother, yielding to this superstitious notion, in her anxiety for his cure, when he was two years old (by the advice of Sir John Floyer, then a physician at Litchfield), carried him to London, where he was actually touched by Queen Anne. But the disease, too obstinate to yield to remedies more powerful, greatly disfigured his countenance, naturally harsh and rugged, impaired his hearing, and deprived him of the sight of his left eye.

He was first taught to read English by Dame Oliver, a widow, who kept a school for young children in Litchfield. His next instructor, in English, was a master whom

he familiarly called Tom Brown, who he said “published a spelling-book, and dedicated it to the UNIVERSE.” He began to learn Latin in the free-school of Litchfield, at first under the care of Mr. Hawkins, the under-master, whom he has described as “a man skilful in his little way.” In about two years, he rose to be under the tuition of Mr. Hunter, the head-master, a very respectable teacher, and a worthy man; but who, according to his account, was “very severe, and wrong headedly severe.” He had for his school-fellows Dr. James, inventor of the fever-powder, Mr. Lowe, canon of Windsor, Dr. Taylor, rector of Ashbourne, and Mr. Hector, surgeon in Birmingham, with whom he contracted a particular intimacy.

While at school, he is said by Mr. Hector to have been indolent and averse from study. But the procrastination of his duties seems neither to have prevented the

timely performance of his exercises, nor to have blemished them with inaccuracies ; for “ he was never known to have been corrected at school, unless for talking and diverting other boys from their business.” Indeed, such was the superiority of his talents above those of his companions, that three of the boys, of whom Mr. Hector was sometimes one, are said to have assembled submissively every morning, to carry him triumphantly upon their shoulders to school. This ovation is believed by Mr. Boswell to have been an honour paid to the early predominance of his intellectual powers alone ; but they who remember what boys are, and who consider that Johnson’s corporeal prowess was by no means despicable, will be apt to suspect that the homage was enforced, at least as much by awe of the one, as by admiration of the other.

After having resided for some months at the house of his cousin, Cornelius Ford, who assisted him in the classics, he was, by his advice, at the age of fifteen, removed to the school of Stourbridge in Worcestershire, of which Mr. Wentworth was then master, whom he has described as “a very able man, but an idle man, and to me unreasonably severe. Yet he taught me a great deal.” He seems to have been there in the double capacity of a scholar and usher, repaying the learning he acquired from his master, by the instruction he gave to the younger boys. Parson Ford he has described in his “Life of Fenton,” as “a clergyman at that time too well known, whose abilities, instead of furnishing convivial merriment to the voluptuous and the dissolute, might have enabled him to excel among the virtuous and the wise.”

He thus discriminated to Dr. Percy, Bishop of Dromore, his progress at his

two grammar-schools: "At one I learnt much in the school, but little from the master; in the other I learnt much from the master, but little in the school."

He remained at Stourbridge little more than a year, and then returned home, where he pursued his studies; but not upon any regular plan. Of this method of attaining knowledge, he seems ever after to have entertained a favourable opinion, and to have recommended it, not without reason, to young men, as the surest means of enticing them to learn. What he read was not works of mere amusement: "They were not voyages and travels, but all literature, all ancient authors, all manly; though but little Greek, only some of Anacreon and Hesiod. But in this irregular manner, I had looked into a great many books, which were not commonly known at the universities, where they seldom read any books but what are put

into their hands by their tutors ; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr. Adams told me I was the best qualified for the university that he had ever known come there."

He had already given several proofs of his poetical genius, both in his school exercises, and in other occasional compositions. Of these Mr. Boswell obtained a considerable collection from Mr. Wentworth, the son of his master, and Mr. Hector, his school-fellow ; of which he has preserved some translations from *Homer*, *Virgil*, *Horace*, &c. Unfortunately the communications of Mr. Wentworth are not distinguished from those of Mr. Hector. Such a precaution would have enabled us to have distinguished with certainty the efforts of the boy, from the production of riper years. His translation of the *first eclogue of Virgil*, is not so harmonious as that from the *sixth book of Homer* ; and both are inferior in this respect to

those which he has made of the *Odes of Horace*. Indeed, in the style and manner of versification used in the last, and in some other of his juvenile pieces, he seems to have made little alteration in his more experienced days ; and it must be added, that in point of smoothness, little improvement could have been made.

After a residence of two years at home, Mr. Andrew Corbet, a gentleman of Shropshire, undertook to support him at Oxford, in the character of a companion to his son, one of his school-fellows, “ though, in fact,” says Mr. Boswell, upon the authority of Dr. Taylor, “ he never received any assistance whatever from that gentleman.” He was accordingly entered a Commoner at Pembroke College, Oxford, October 31. 1728, being then in his nineteenth year.

On the night of his arrival at Oxford, his father, who had anxiously accompa-

nied him, found means to have him introduced to Mr. Jorden, Fellow of Pembroke, who was to be his tutor. According to Dr. Adams, who was present, he seemed very full of the merits of his son, and told the company he was a good scholar and a poet, and wrote Latin verses. His figure and manner seemed strange to them; but he behaved modestly, and sat silent, till, upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, he suddenly struck in, and quoted Macrobius; and this gave the first impression of that extensive reading in which he had indulged himself.

Of his tutor, Mr. Jorden, he gave Mr. Boswell the following account: "He was a very worthy man, but a heavy man, and I did not profit much by his instruction. Indeed, I did not attend him much." He had, however, a love and respect for Jorden, not for his literature, but for his worth. "Whenever (said he) a young

man becomes Jorden's pupil, he becomes his son."

The fifth of November was at that time kept with great solemnity at Pembroke College, and exercises upon the gunpowder plot were required. Johnson neglected to perform his. To apologize for his neglect, he gave in a short copy of verses, intituled *Somnium*, containing a common thought, "that the muse had come to him in his sleep, and whispered that it did not become him to write on such subjects as politics; he should confine himself to humbler themes;" but the versification was truly Virgilian.

Having given such a specimen of his poetical powers, he was asked by Mr. Jorden to translate Pope's *Messiah* into Latin hexameter verse, as a Christmas exercise. He performed it with uncommon rapidity, and in so masterly a manner, that he obtained great applause from it, which

ever after kept him high in the estimation of his college and indeed of all the university. Pope, impelled by gratitude and taste, perhaps not unassisted by vanity, is reported to have said concerning it, "that the author would leave it a question for posterity, whether his or mine be the original?" It was first printed by his father, without his knowledge; and afterwards inserted in a "Miscellany," published by subscription at Oxford, in 1731, by Mr. John Husbands, Fellow of Pembroke College.

The particular course of his reading while at Oxford, and during the time of vacation which he passed at home, cannot be traced. From his earliest years he loved to read poetry and romances of chivalry. He read Shakspeare at a period so early, that the speech of the ghost in "Hamlet" terrified him when he was alone. Horace's odes were the compo-

tions he most liked in early life ; but it was long before he could relish his fatires and epistles. He told Mr. Boswell, what he read *solidly* at Oxford was Greek, not the Grecian historians, but Homer and Euripides, and now and then a little epigram ; that the study of which he was most fond was metaphysics ; but he had not read much even in that way. We may be absolutely certain, however, both from his writings and his conversation, that his reading was very extensive. He projected a common-place book to the extent of six folio volumes, but according to Sir John Hawkins, the blank leaves far exceeded the written ones.

In 1729, while at Litchfield, during the college vacation, the “ morbid melancholy” which was lurking in his constitution, gathered such strength as to afflict him in a dreadful manner. He was overwhelmed with an horrible hypocondria, with perpe-

tual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience, and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, that made existence misery. He fancied himself seized by, or approaching to insanity; in conformity with which notion he applied, when he was at the very worst, to his godfather, Dr. Swinfen, physician in Litchfield, and put into his hand a state of his case, written in Latin; “which showed,” as Mr. Boswell expresses it, “an uncommon vigour, not only of fancy and taste, but of judgment.” That he should have supposed himself approaching to insanity, at the very time when he was giving proofs of a more than ordinary soundness and vigour of judgment, is less strange than that Mr. Boswell should consider the vigour of *fancy*, which he displayed on such a subject, a proof of his sanity. It is a common effect of melancholy to make those who are afflicted with it imagine that they are actually suffering

those evils which happen to be most strongly presented to their minds. But there is a clear distinction between a disorder which affects only the imagination and spirits, while the judgment is sound, and a disorder by which the judgment itself is impaired. Whatever be the arguments in favour of free-will, of volition unrestrained by the force and prevalence of motives, it must be allowed that the effects of reason on the human mind are not at all times, and on all subjects, equally powerful. The mind, like the body, has its weak organs; in other words, the impressions on some subjects are so deeply fixed, that the judgment is no longer able to guide the operations of the mind, in reasoning on, or in judging of them. The imagination seizes the rein, and till the force of the idea is lessened from habit, the usual powers are suspended. But this is not madness; for strong impressions of

various kinds, will, in different minds, produce similar effects. From this dismal malady, which he “ did not then know how to manage,” he never afterwards was perfectly relieved ; and all his labours, and all his employments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence.

In the history of his mind, his religious progress is an important article. He had been early instructed in the doctrines of the church of England, by his mother, who continued her pious care with assiduity, but in his opinion, not with judgment. “ Sunday” said he “ was a heavy day to me when I was a boy. My mother confined me on Sundays, and made me read “ The Whole Duty of Man,” from a great part of which I could derive no instruction. When, for instance, I read the chapter on theft, which, from infancy, I had been taught was wrong, I was no more convinced that theft was wrong than before ; so there was no access-

sion of knowledge. A boy should be introduced to such books by having his attention directed to the arrangement, to the style, and other excellencies of composition, that the mind being thus engaged by an amusing variety of objects, may not grow weary."

He communicated to Mr. Boswell the following account of "the first occasion of his thinking in earnest of religion." I fell into an inattention to religion, or an indifference about it, in my ninth year. The church at Litchfield, in which we had a seat, wanted reparation: so I was to go and find a seat in other churches; and having bad eyes, and being awkward about this, I used to go and read in the fields on Sunday. This habit continued till my fourteenth year, and still I find a great reluctance to go to church. I then became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for I did not much *think* about it; and

this lasted till I went to Oxford, where it would not be *suffered*. When at Oxford, I took up Law's "Serious Call to the Unconverted," expecting to find it a dull book (as such books generally are), and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an over-match for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational inquiry."

Serious impressions of religion, from particular incidents, it is certain, have been experienced by many pious persons; though it must be acknowledged, that weak minds, from an erroneous supposition, that no man is in a state of grace, who has not felt a particular conversion, have, in some cases, brought a degree of ridicule upon them; a ridicule of which it is inconsiderate or unfair to make a general application. How seriously Johnson was impressed with a sense of religion, from this time

forward, appears from the whole tenor of his life and writings. Religion was the predominant object of his thoughts ; though he seems not to have attained all the tranquillity and assurance in his practice of its duties that are so earnestly to be desired. His sentiments, upon points of abstract virtue and rectitude, were in the highest degree elevated and generous, but he was unfortunate enough to have the sublimity of his mind degraded by the hypochondriacal propensities of his animal constitution. The serenity, the independence, and the exultation of religion, were sentiments to which he was a stranger. He saw the Almighty in a different light from what he is represented in the purer page of the gospel ; and he trembled in the presence of Infinite Goodness. Those tenets of the church of England, which are most nearly allied to Calvinism, were congenial to his general feelings, and they

made an early impression, which habits confirmed, and which reason, if ever exerted, could not efface. At the latter part of his life these terrors had a considerable effect; nor was their influence lost, till disease had weakened his powers, and blunted his feelings.

The year following, 1730, Mr Corbet left the university, and his father, to whom, according to Sir John Hawkins, he trusted for support, declined contributing any farther to Johnson's maintenance, than paying for his Commons. His father's business was by no means lucrative. His remittances, consequently, were too small even to supply the decencies of external appearance; and the very shoes that he wore were so much torn, that they could no longer conceal his feet. So jealous, however, was he of appearing an object of eleemosynary contribution, that a new pair having been placed at his door, by

some unknown hand, he flung them away with indignation.

While thus oppressed by want, he seems to have yielded to that indifference to fame and improvement, which is the offspring of despair. “ He was generally seen,” says Dr. Percy, “ lounging at the college gate, with a circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiring them up to rebellion against the college discipline, which, in his maturer years, he so much extolled.” The account of his conduct given by Dr. Adams, who was at least his nominal tutor for some time before he quitted the college, is more favourable to his happiness, but is less true. “ Johnson,” says he, “ while he was at Pembroke College, was caressed and loved by all about him; he was a gay and frolicsome fellow, and passed there the happiest part of his life.”

But his own comment upon this opinion, when mentioned to him by Mr Boswell, shows how fallacious it is to estimate human happiness by external appearances :

“ Ah Sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit ; so I disregarded all power, and all authority.”

He struggled for another year in this unequal conflict, and professed a desire to practise either the Civil or the Common Law ; but his debts in college increasing, and his scanty remittances from Litchfield, which had all along been made with great difficulty, being discontinued, his father having fallen into a state of insolvency, he was compelled, by irresistible necessity, to relinquish his scheme, and left the college in autumn 1735, without a degree, having been a member of it little more than three

years. This was a circumstance, which, in the subsequent part of his life, he had occasion to regret, as the want of it was an obstacle to his obtaining a settlement, whence he might have derived that subsistence of which he was certain by no other means.

From the university he returned to his native city, destitute, and not knowing how he should gain even a decent livelihood. But he was so far fortunate, that the respectable character of his parents, and his own merit, secured him a kind reception in the best families of Litchfield. Mr. Gilbert Walmsley, Register of the Prerogative Court at Litchfield, “ was one of the first friends that Literature procured” him; and he passed much time in the families of Mr. Howard, and Dr. Swinfen, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Levett, and Captain Garrick, father of the great ornament of the British stage. He has drawn the character of Mr. Walmsley in his “ Life of Smith,”

in the glowing colours of gratitude, intermingled with the dark hues of political prejudice. In his abhorrence of whiggism, he has imputed to his friend and benefactor, "all the virulence and malevolence of his party." Yet Mr. Walmfley, whose real character is a noble one, loved Johnson enough to endure in *him* the principles he despised.

In the circles of Litchfield, he was frequently in the company of ladies, particularly at Mr. Walmfley's, whose wife and sister-in-law, of the name of Aston, and the daughters of a Baronet, were remarkable for elegance and good breeding. Of Miss Molly Aston, who was afterwards married to Captain Brodie of the Navy, he used to speak with the warmest admiration. "Molly" (said he) "was a beauty and a scholar, a wit and a whig, and she talked all in praise of liberty; and so

I made this epigram upon her. She was the loveliest creature I ever saw !

*Liber ut esse velim, fuasisti, pulchra Maria,
Ut maneam liber ; pulchra Maria, vale."*

Of this epigram, Mrs. Piozzi, and Mr. Joddrel, and Mr. Boswell, among others, have offered translations. The following version is given by Mr. Boswell :

*Adieu Maria! since you'd have me free :
For who beholds thy charms, a slave must be.*

In December 1731, his father died, in the 79th year of his age, in very narrow circumstances ; for, after providing for his mother, that portion of the effects which fell to his share amounted only to twenty pounds.

In the forlorn state of his circumstances, he accepted the employment of usher in the school of Market-Bosworth in Leicestershire, to which he went on foot, July

16. 1732. He resided in the house of Sir Woolston Dixie, the patron of the school, to whom he officiated as a kind of domestic chaplain; and who treated him with intolerable harshness. His employment was irksome to him in every respect; and after suffering for a few months, what Mr. Boswell terms “complicated misery,” he relinquished a situation which he ever afterwards remembered with a degree of horror.

Being now again totally unoccupied, he was invited by Mr. Hector to pass some time with him at Birmingham, as his guest, at the house of Mr. Warren, with whom he lodged. Mr. Warren was the first established bookseller in Birmingham, and was very attentive to Johnson, and obtained the assistance of his pen, in furnishing some periodical essays in a newspaper of which he was proprietor.

In June 1733, he resided in the house of a person named Jarvis, in another part

of the town, where he translated and abridged, from the French of the Abbé Le Grand, a *Voyage to Abyssinia*, written originally by *Jerome Lobo*, a Portuguese Jesuit. For this work, which was printed in Birmingham, and published by Bettefworth and Hitch of Pater-noster Row, London, 8vo, 1735, but without the translator's name, he had from Mr. Warren only five guineas. It is the first prose work of Johnson; but it exhibits no specimen of elegance; neither is it marked by any character of style, which would lead to a discovery of the translator, from an acquaintance with his latter productions. It has, however, been justly remarked by Mr. Boswell, that the *Preface* and *Dedication*, contain strong and not unfavourable specimens of that style of thought and manner of expression, which he afterwards adopted.

In February 1734, he returned to Litchfield, and in August following, published

propofals for printing by fubfcription an edition of the Latin poems of Politian, *Angeli Politiani Poemata Latina, quibus notas, cum hiftoria Latinæ poefeos, a Petrarchæ ævo ad Politiani tempora deducta et vita Politiani fufius quam antebac enarrata, addidit SAM. JOHNSON*; the work to be printed in thirty 8vo fheets, price 5s. “ Subfcriptions taken in by the editor, or N. Johnfon, book-feller of Litchfield,” his brother, who had taken up his father’s trade. For want of encouragement, the work never appeared, and probably never was executed.

We find him again this year at Birmingham; and in order to procure fome little fubfiftence by his pen, he addreffed a letter, under the name of *S. Smith*, to Mr. Edward Cave, the proprietor of the “ Gentleman’s Magazine,” November 25. 1734, in which he propofed, “ on reafonable terms, fometimes to fupply him with

poems, inscriptions, &c. never printed before, and short literary dissertations in Latin or English, critical remarks on authors, ancient or modern, forgotten poems that deserve revival, loose pieces, like Floyer's, worth preserving." To this letter Mr. Cave returned an answer, dated December 2. 1734; but it does not appear that any thing was done in consequence of it.

He had, from his infancy, been sensible to the influence of female charms. When at Stourbridge school he was much enamoured of Olivia Llyod, a young Quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses; he conceived a tender passion for Lucy Porter, whose mother he afterwards married, and whom he had frequent opportunities of seeing at the house of Mr. Hunter of Litchfield, whose second wife was her aunt. He addressed to her, as she herself informed Miss Seward, "when he was a lad," the *verses to a Lady, on her presenting*

the author with a sprig of myrtle; which Mr. Hector says were written at his request, in 1731, for his friend Mr. Morgan Graves; but the two accounts are not irreconcilable, for he might give them to Mr. Hector, without thinking it material to mention their pre-existence.

His juvenile attachments to the fair sex were, however, very transient, and he never had a criminal connection. In 1735, he became the fervent admirer of Mrs. Porter, widow of Mr. Henry Porter, mercer in Birmingham; to whose family he had probably been introduced by his sister Mrs. Hunter of Litchfield, or through his acquaintance with Jarvis, who might be a relation of Mrs. Porter, whose maiden name was Jarvis. “It was,” he said, “a love match on both sides;” and, judging from the description of their persons, we must suppose that the passion was not inspired by the beauties of form, or graces

of manner, but by a mutual admiration of each others mind. Johnson's appearance is described as being very forbidding: "He was then lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye, and the scars of the scrophula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair, which was straight and stiff, and separated behind; and he often had seemingly convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended at once to excite surprise and ridicule." Mrs. Porter was double the age of Johnson, and her person and manner, as described by Garrick, were by no means pleasing to others. "She was very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance. Her swelled cheeks were of a florid red, produced by thick painting, and increased by the liberal use of cordials, glaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in her speech and in her general behaviour."

It is to be observed, however, that whatever her real charms may have been, Johnson thought her beautiful, for in her *Epitaph* he has recorded her as such; and in his *Prayers* and *Meditations*, we find very remarkable evidence that his regard and fondness for her never ceased, even after death.

The marriage ceremony was performed, July 9th, at Derby, for which place the bride and bridegroom set out on horseback; and it must be allowed that the capricious and fantastic behaviour of the bride, during the journey to church, upon the nuptial morn, as related by Mr. Boswell, was a singular beginning of connubial felicity.

She was worth about 800l., which, to a person in Johnson's circumstances, made it a desirable match. To turn this sum to the best advantage, he hired a large house at Edial, near Litchfield, and set

up a private classical academy, in which he was encouraged by his friend Mr. Walmfley. In the "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1736, there is the following "ADVERTISEMENT—At Edial, near Litchfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages, by SAMUEL JOHNSON." The plan, notwithstanding, proved abortive. The only pupils that were put under his care, were Garrick, and his brother George, and a Mr. Offely, a young gentleman of a good fortune, who died early.

About this time we find him diligently employed on his *Irene*, a tragedy, with which Mr. Walmfley was so well pleased, that he advised him to proceed with it. It is founded upon a passage in Knolles's "History of the Turks," a book which he afterwards highly praised and recommended in the *Rambler*.

Disappointed in his expectation of deriving subsistence from the establishment of a boarding-school, he now thought of trying his fortune in London, the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope, and the highest encouragement.

On the 2d of March 1737, being the 28th year of his age, he set out for London, and it is a memorable circumstance, that his pupil Garrick went thither at the same time, with intention to complete his education, and follow the profession of the law. They were recommended to Mr. Colson, master of the mathematical school at Rochester, by a letter from Mr. Walmfley, who mentions the joint expedition of these two eminent men to the metropolis, in the following manner :

“ This young gentleman, and another neighbour of mine, one Mr. Samuel Johnson, set out this morning for London to-

gether. Davy Garrick is to be with you early the next week, and Mr. Johnson, to try his fate with a tragedy, and to see to get himself employed in some translation, either from the Latin or the French. Johnson is a very good scholar and poet, and I have great hopes will turn out a fine tragedy writer."

How he employed himself upon his first coming to London, is not certainly known. His first lodgings were at the house of Mr. Norris a staymaker in Exeter-Street, in the Strand. Here he found it necessary to practise the most rigid economy; and his *Ofellus* in the *Art of Living in London*, is a real character of an Irish painter, who initiated him in the art of living cheaply in London.

Soon after his arrival in London, he renewed his acquaintance with Mr. Henry Hervey, one of the branches of the Bristol family, whom he had known when he was

quartered at Litchfield as an officer of the army. At his house he was entertained with a kindness and hospitality of which he ever afterwards retained a warm remembrance. Not very long before his death, he described this early friend “ Harry Hervey,” thus: “ he was a vicious man, but very kind to me. If you call a dog *Hervey*, I shall love him.”

He had now written three acts of his *Irene*; and he retired for some time to lodgings at Greenwich, where he proceeded in it somewhat farther, and used to compose walking in the Park; but he did not stay long enough in that place to finish it.

At this period, he wished to engage more closely with Mr. Cave, and proposed to him, in a letter dated Greenwich, July 12. 1737, to undertake a translation of Father Paul Sarpi’s “ History of the Council of Trent,” from the French edition of Dr.

Le Courayer. His propofal was accepted ; but it fhould feem from this letter, though fubfcribed with his own name, that he had not yet been introduced to Mr. Cave.

In the courfe of the fummer, he returned to Litchfield, where he had left his wife ; and there he at laft finifhed his tragedy ; which was not executed with his rapidity of compofition upon other occafions, but was flowly and painfully elaborated. The original unformed fketeh of this tragedy, partly in the raw materials of profe, and partly worked up in verfe, in his own handwriting, is preferved in the King's Library.

In three months after, he removed to London with his wife ; but her daughter, who had lived with them at Edial, was left with her relations in the country. His lodgings were for fome time in Wood-ftock-Street, near Hanover-Square, and afterwards in Caftle-Street, near Cavendifh-Square. His tragedy being, as he thought,

completely finished, and fit for the stage, he solicited Mr. Fleetwood, the manager of Drury-Lane Theatre, to have it acted at his house; but Mr. Fleetwood would not accept it.

Upon his coming to London, he was enlisted by Mr. Cave, as a regular coadjutor in his magazine, which, for many years, was his principal resource for employment and support. A considerable period of his life is lost in saying that he was the hireling of Mr. Cave. The narrative is little diversified by the enumeration of his contributions. But the publications of a writer, like the battles and sieges of a general, are the circumstances which must fix the several eras of his life. In this part of the narrative, the pieces acknowledged by Johnson to be of his writing, are printed in Italics, and those which are ascribed to him upon good authority, or internal evi-

dence, are distinguished by inverted commas.

His first performance in the "Gentleman's Magazine," was a Latin Ode, *Ad Urbanum*, in March 1738, a translation of which, by an unknown correspondent, appeared in the Magazine for May following.

At this period, the misfortunes and misconduct of Savage had reduced him to the lowest state of wretchedness as a writer for bread; and his visits at St. John's Gate, where the "Gentleman's Magazine" was originally printed, naturally brought Johnson and him together. Johnson commenced an intimacy with this extraordinary man. Both had great parts, and they were equally under the pressure of want. They had a fellow-feeling, and sympathy united them closer.

It is melancholy to reflect, that Johnson and Savage were sometimes in such

extreme indigence, that they could not pay for a lodging, so that they have wandered together whole nights in the streets. Yet as Savage had seen life in all its varieties, and been much in the company of the statesmen and wits of his time, we may suppose, in these scenes of distress, that he communicated to Johnson an abundant supply of such materials as his philosophical curiosity most eagerly desired, and mentioned many of the anecdotes with which he afterwards enriched the life of his unhappy companion.

He mentioned to Sir Joshua Reynolds, that one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St. James's Square, for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation, but in high spirits; and, brimful of patriotism, traversed the Square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and "resolved they would *stand by their country.*"

Sir John Hawkins supposes that "Johnson was captivated by the address and demeanour of Savage, who, as to his exterior, was to a remarkable degree accomplished; he was a handsome well made man, and very courteous in the modes of salutation." He took off his hat, he tells us, with a good air, made a graceful bow, and was a good swordsman. "These accomplishments," he adds, "and the ease and pleasantry of his conversation, were probably the charms that wrought on Johnson, who at this time had not been accustomed to the conversation of gentlemen." But if, according to his biographer's notion, he "never saw the charms of his wife," how should he perceive the graces of Savage?

Johnson, indeed, describes him as having "a graceful and manly deportment, a solemn dignity of mien, but which, upon a nearer acquaintance, softened into an

engaging easiness of manners." How highly he admired him for that knowledge, which he himself so much cultivated, and what kindness he entertained for him, appears in the following verses in the Gentleman's Magazine for April 1738.

*Ad RICARDUM SAVAGE Arm. humani generis
amatorem.*

Humani studium generis cui pectore fervet,
O! colat humanum te foveatque genus!

About this time he became acquainted with Miss Elizabeth Carter, the learned translator of "Epictetus," to whom he paid a friendly attention, and in the same Magazine complimented her in *An Ænigma to Eliza*, both in Greek and Latin. He writes Mr. Cave, "I think she ought to be celebrated in as many different languages as Lewis le Grand." His verses *to a Lady*, (Miss Molly Aston) *who spoke in defence of liberty*, first appeared in the same Magazine.

In May 1738, he published his *London, a Poem*, written in imitation of the 3d satire of Juvenal. It has been generally said, that he offered it to several booksellers, none of whom would purchase it. Mr. Cave, at last, communicated it to Doddsley, who had taste enough to perceive its uncommon merit, and thought it “ creditable to be concerned with it.” Doddsley gave him 10l. for the copy. It is remarkable, that it came out on the same morning with Pope’s satire, intitled, “ 1738,” One of its warmest patrons was General Oglethorpe. Pope also was so struck with its merit, that he sought to discover the author, and prophesied his future fame. “ He will,” said he, “ soon be *deterré*,” and it appears from his note to Lord Gower, he himself was successful in his inquiries. To “ a short extract from *London*,” in the Gentleman’s Magazine for May, is added, “ Become remarkable for

having got to the second edition in the space of a week." This admirable poem laid the first foundation of his fame. Sir John Hawkins observes, that in this poem he has adopted the vulgar topic of the time, to gratify the malevolence of the Tory faction; and Mr. Boswell candidly allows, that "the flame of patriotism and zeal for popular resistance with which it is fraught, had no just cause." It contains the most spirited invectives against tyranny and oppression, the warmest predilection for his own country, and the purest love of virtue, interspersed with traits of his own particular character and situation. He heated his mind with the ardour of Juvenal, and he wrote with the spirit and energy of a fine poet, and a sharp critic of the times. Boileau had imitated the same satire with great success, applying it to Paris; but an attentive comparison will satisfy every reader that he is much excelled

by Johnson. Oldham had also imitated it, and applied it to London; but there is scarcely any coincidence between the two performances, though upon the very same subject.

In the course of his engagement with Mr. Cave, he composed the *Debates in the Senate of Magna Lilliputia*, the first number of which appeared in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for June 1738, sometimes with feigned names of the several speeches, sometimes with denominations formed of the letters of their real names, so that they might be easily decyphered. Parliament then kept the press in a kind of mysterious awe, which made it necessary to have recourse to such devices. The debates for some time were brought home and digested by Guthrie, and afterwards sent by Mr. Cave to Johnson for his revision. When Guthrie had attained to a greater variety of employment, and the speeches were

more and more enriched by the accession of Johnson's genius, it was resolved that he should do the whole himself, from notes furnished by persons employed to attend in both houses of Parliament. His sole composition of them began November 19. 1740, and ended February 23. 1742-3. From that time they were written by Hawkesworth to the year 1760. Johnson acknowledged the debates to be spurious, long after the world had considered them as genuine; and some days previous to his death, declared, that of all his writings they gave him the most uneasiness. The deceit, however, could not be very pernicious, in the effects of which so many persons were involved. Neither are they so completely his own composition as is generally supposed. That notes of the speeches were taken in the Houses of Parliament, and given to him, is evident from his own declarations. And it does not

appear probable that Mr. Cave, who was ever attentive to the improvement of his Magazine, should be more negligent in procuring notes as accurate as he could, during the time when Johnson executed this department, than when it was in the hands of Guthrie. It seems at least most likely, therefore, that the language and illustrations are Johnson's own, but that the arguments and general arrangements were taken from the several speeches spoken in either House.

The trade of writing was, however, so little profitable, that notwithstanding the success of his *London*, he wished to accept an offer made to him, of becoming master of the free school at Appleby in Leicestershire (Pope says in Shropshire), the salary of which was sixty pounds a-year. But the statutes of the school required that he should be a Master of Arts, and it was then thought too great a favour to be asked of

the University of Oxford. Pope, without any knowledge of him, but from his *London*, recommended him to Lord Gower, who, by a letter which has been often printed, to a friend of Swift, dated Trentham, August 1. 1738, endeavoured to procure him a degree from Trinity-College, Dublin. This expedient failed. There is reason to think that Swift declined to meddle in the business; and to this circumstance Johnson's known dislike of Swift has been often imputed.

He made one other effort to emancipate himself from the drudgery of authorship, by endeavouring to be introduced to the bar at Doctor's Commons; but here the want of a Doctor's degree in Civil Law, was also an unfurmountable impediment.

He was, therefore, under the necessity of persevering in that course into which he was forced; and we find him prosecuting his design of translating Father Paul's

“ *History of the Council of Trent*,” in 2 vols. 4to, which was announced in the “ *Weekly Miscellany*,” October 21. 1738. Twelve sheets of this translation were printed off; but the design was dropped; for it happened, that another Samuel Johnson, Librarian of St. Martin’s in the Fields, and Curate of that parish, had engaged in the same undertaking, under the patronage of Dr. Pearce; the consequence of which was, an opposition, which mutually destroyed each others hopes of success.

In the “ *Gentleman’s Magazine*” of this year, besides the pieces already mentioned, he gave a *Life of Father Paul* in the November Magazine, and wrote the “ *Preface*” to the volume. The “ *Apotheosis of Milton, a vision*,” printed in the Magazine for 1738 and 1739, given to him by Sir John Hawkins, was the production of Guthrie. The translation of Cronfaz’s “ *Examination of Pope’s Essay on Man*,”

and printed by Cave in November 1738, has been ascribed to him; but Miss Carter has lately acknowledged that she was the translator.

In 1739, beside the assistance he gave to the *Debates in the Senate of Lilliput*, his writings in the "Gentleman's Magazine," were, *The Life of Boerhaave*, *An Appeal to the Public in behalf of the Editor*, *Verses to Eliza*, *a Greek Epigram to Dr. Birch*, and "Considerations on the case of Dr. Trapp's Sermons," reprinted in the Magazine for July 1787.

The same year he joined in the clamour against Walpole, and published his famous Jacobite pamphlet intituled, *Marmor Norfolciense, or an Essay on an Ancient Prophetical inscription in Monkish rhyme, lately discovered near Lynne, in Norfolk, by Probus Britannicus*. In this performance, he inveighs against the Brunswick succession, and the measures of Government consequent upon it,

with warm anti-Hanoverian zeal. The Jacobite principles inculcated by it, according to Sir John Hawkins, aroused the vigilance of the Ministry. A warrant was issued, and messengers were employed to apprehend the author, who, it seems, was known. To elude his pursuers, he retired with his wife to Lambeth-marsh, and there lay concealed in an obscure lodging till the scent grew cold. Mr. Boswell however denies that there is any foundation for this story ; for that Mr. Steele, one of the late secretaries of the Treasury, had directed every possible search to be made in the records of the Treasury and Secretary of State's Office, but could find no trace of any warrant having been issued to apprehend the author of this pamphlet. His *Marmor Norfolciense* obtained also the honour of Pope's commendation, as appears from the following note concerning Johnson, copied with minute exactness, by

Mr. Boswell, from the original in the possession of Dr. Percy.

“ This [*London*] is imitated by one Johnson, who put in for a public school in Shropshire, but was disappointed. He has an infirmity of the convulsive kind, that attacks him sometimes, so as to make him a sad spectacle. Mr. P. from the merit of this work, which was all the knowledge he had of him, endeavoured to serve him without his own application; and wrote to my Lord Gower, but he did not succeed; Mr. Johnson published afterwards another poem in Latin, with notes, the whole very humorous, called the Norfolk Prophecy.”

In the same year 1739, he published *A complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage, from the malicious and scandalous aspersions of Mr. Brooke, author of Gustavus Vasa, in 4to.* This was an ironical, but a very proper attack upon the Lord Chamberlain, for the unjustifiable suppression of

that tragedy. Indeed the power vested in that officer, respecting dramatic pieces, is a disgrace to a free country; and the act which gave him that power ought to be repealed. To justify the rejection of this play, Sir John Hawkins selects a few passages, not one of which would give umbrage at this day.

In July 1739, a subscription was completed for Savage, who was to retire to Swansea; and he parted with the companion of his midnight rambles, never to see him more. This separation was perhaps a real advantage to Johnson. By associating with Savage, who was habituated to the licentiousness and dissipation of the town, Johnson, though his good principles remained steady, did not entirely preserve that temperance for which he was remarkable, in days of greater simplicity, but was imperceptibly led into some indulgences, which occasioned much distress to his vir-

tuous mind. It is said by Sir John Hawkins, that during his connection with Savage, a short separation took place between Johnson and his wife. They were, however, soon brought together again. Johnson loved her, and showed his affection in various modes of gallantry, which Garrick used to mimic. The affectation of fashionable airs did not sit easy on Johnson; his gallantry was received by the wife with the flutter of a coquette, and both, we may believe, exposed themselves to ridicule.

In 1740, he contributed to the "Gentleman's Magazine," the "Preface," *Life of Admiral Blake*, and the first parts of those of *Sir Francis Drake*, and of *Philip Barrettier*, both which he finished the year after; An "Essay on Epitaphs," and an *Epitaph on Philips, a musician*, which was afterwards published, with some other pieces, in Miss Williams's "Miscellanies."

In 1741, he wrote for the "Gentleman's Magazine," the "Preface," conclusion of his *Lives of Drake and Barettier*; "A free translation of the Jests of Hierocles, with an Introduction," "Debate on the proposal of Parliament to Cromwell, to assume the title of King, abridged, methodized, and digested;" "Translation of Abbé Guyon's Dissertation on the Amazons;" "Translation of Fontenelle's Panegyric on Dr. Morin." He, this year, and the two following, wrote the *Parliamentary Debates*. The eloquence, the force of argument, and the splendour of language displayed in the several speeches, are well known, and universally admired. To one who praised his impartiality, observing that he had dealt out reason and eloquence with an equal hand to both parties, "That is not quite true, Sir, said Johnson; I saved appearances well enough, but I took care that the WHIG DOGS should not have the

best of it." They have been collected in 2 vols. 8vo, 1787, and recommended to the notice of parliamentary speakers, as orations upon questions of public importance, by a "Preface," written by George Chalmers, Esq. whose commercial and biographical writings are well known and esteemed.

In 1742, he wrote for the "Gentleman's Magazine," the "Preface;" the *Parliamentary Debates; Essay on the Account of the Conduct of the Duchess of Marlborough*, then the popular topic of conversation; *The Life of Peter Burman; Additions to his Life of Barettier; The Life of Sydenham*, afterwards prefixed to Swan's edition of his works; the "Foreign History," for December; "Essay on the Description of China, from the French of Du Halde; *Proposals for printing Bibliotheca Harleiana; or, a Catalogue of the Library of the Earl of Oxford.*" It was afterwards prefixed to the

first volume of the "Catalogue," in which the Latin account of books were written by him. He was employed in this business by Mr. Thomas Osborne, bookfeller in Gray's Inn, who purchased the library for 13,000*l.*, a sum which, Mr. Oldys says, in one of his manuscripts, was not more than the binding of the books had cost; yet the slowness of the sale was such, that there was not much gained by it. It has been confidently related, with many embellishments, that Johnson knocked Osborne down in his shop with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. Johnson himself relates it differently to Mr. Boswell. "Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him; but it was not in his shop, it was in my own chamber." This anecdote has been often told to prove Johnson's ferocity; but merit cannot always take the spurns of the unworthy with patience and a forbearing spirit.

He wrote in the “ Gentleman’s Magazine” for 1743, the “ Preface ;” the *Parliamentary Debates* for January and February; “ Considerations on the Dispute between Cronfaz and Warburton, on Pope’s Essay on Man,” in which he defends Cronfaz ; *Ad Lauram parituram Epigramma* ; *A Latin translation of Pope’s Verses on his Grotto* ; an exquisitely beautiful *Ode on Friendship* ; and an “ Advertisement” for Osborne, concerning the Harleian Catalogue.

The same year he wrote for his school-fellow, Dr. James’s “ Medicinal Dictionary,” in 3 vols. folio, the *Dedication to Dr. Mead*, which is conceived with great address, to conciliate the patronage of that very eminent man. He had also written, or assisted in writing, the proposals for this work ; and, being very fond of the study of physic, in which Dr. James was his master, he furnished some of the articles.

At this time, his circumstances were much embarrassed; yet such was his liberal affection for his mother, that he took upon himself a debt of her's, to Mr. Levett of Litchfield, which, though only twelve pounds, was then considerable to him.

In 1744, he wrote the "Preface" for the Gentleman's Magazine, and the *Preface to the Harleian Miscellany*. The selection of the pamphlets of which it was composed was made by Mr. Oldys, a man of eager curiosity, and indefatigable diligence, to whom English literature owes many obligations.

The same year he produced one work fully sufficient to maintain the high reputation which he had acquired. This was the *Life of Savage*, which he had announced his intention of writing in the "Gentleman's Magazine," for August 1743. It is said by Sir John Hawkins, that he composed the whole of it in thirty-six hours;

but Mr. Boswell states, upon Johnson's own authority, that he composed forty-eight of the present octavo pages at a sitting, but that he sat up all night. It came out in February, from the shop of Roberts, who, in April following, republished his *Life of Baretier*, in a separate pamphlet. It was no sooner published than the following liberal praise was given to it by Fielding, in "The Champion," which was copied into the "Gentleman's Magazine" for April, and confirmed by the approbation of the public.

"This pamphlet is, without flattery to its author, as just and well-written a piece of its kind as I ever saw. It is certainly penned with equal accuracy and spirit, of which I am so much the better judge, as I knew many of the facts to be strictly true, and very fairly related. It is a very amusing, and withal a very instructive and valuable performance. The author's ob-

Observations are short, significant, and just, as his narrative is remarkably smooth, and well disposed. His reflections open to all the recesses of the human heart; and, in a word, a more just or pleasant, a more engaging, or a more instructive treatise on all the excellencies and defects of human nature, is scarce to be found in our own, or perhaps any other language."

Johnson had now lived nearly half his days, without friends or lucrative profession; he had toiled and laboured, yet still, as he himself expresses it, was "to provide for the day that was passing over him." Of the profession of an unfriended author he saw the danger and the difficulties. Amhurst, who had conducted "The Craftsman," Savage, Boyse, and others who had laboured in literature, without emerging from distress, were recent examples, and clouded his prospect.

Sir John Hawkins has preserved a list of literary projects, not less than thirty-nine articles, which he had formed in the course of his studies; but such was his want of encouragement, or the versatility of his temper, that not one of all his schemes was ever executed.

A new edition of Shakspeare now occurred to him, and, as a prelude to it, in April 1745, he published a pamphlet, intitled *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, with Remarks on Sir Thomas Hanmer's edition of Shakspeare; to which is affixed, proposals for a new edition of Shakspeare, with a Specimen*, 8vo. The notice of the public was, however, not excited to his anonymous proposals for the execution of a task which Warburton was known to have undertaken; the project, therefore, died at that time, to revive at a future period. His pamphlet, however, was highly esteemed, and even the supercilious War-

burton, in the "Preface" to his *Shakespeare*, published two years afterwards, had the candour to exempt it from his general censure "of those things which have been published under the titles of "Essays," "Remarks," "Observations," &c. on "*Shakespeare*," and spoke of it as the work of "a man of great parts and genius." This obligation Johnson always acknowledged in terms of gratitude. "He praised me (said he) at a time when praise was of value to me,"

In the year 1746, which was marked by a civil war in Britain, when a rash attempt was made to restore the house of Stuart to the throne, his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended. His attachment to that unfortunate family is well known; some may imagine that a sympathetic anxiety impeded the exertion of his intellectual powers; but it is probable that he was, during that

time, employed upon his *Shakspeare*, or sketching the outlines of his *Dictionary of the English Language*.

Having formed and digested the plan of his great philological work, which might then be esteemed one of the desiderata of English literature, he communicated it to the public, in 1747, in a pamphlet intituled, *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language, addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, one of his Majesty's Secretaries of State*. The hint of undertaking this work is said to have been first suggested to Johnson by Doddsley, who contracted with him for the execution of it in conjunction with Mr. Charles Hitch, Mr. Andrew Millar, the two Messrs. Longman, and the two Messrs. Knapton. The price stipulated was 1575l.

The *Plan* has not only the substantial merit of comprehension, perspicuity, and precision, but the language of it is unex-

ceptionably excellent ; and never was there a more dignified strain of compliment than that in which he courts the attention of Chesterfield, who was very ambitious of literary distinction, and who, upon being informed of the design, had expressed himself in terms very favourable to its success. The way in which it came to be inscribed to Chesterfield was this : “ I had neglected,” says he, “ to write it by the time appointed. Doddsley suggested a desire to have it addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I laid hold of this as a pretext for delay, that it might be better done, and let Doddsley have his desire.” The *Plan* itself, however, proves that the Earl not only favoured the design, but that there had been a particular communication with his Lordship concerning it.

To enable him to complete this vast undertaking, he hired a house in Gough-Square, Fleet-Street, fitted up one of the

upper rooms after the manner of a counting-house, and employed six amanuenses there in transcribing ; five of whom were natives of North Britain, Mr. Macbean, author of “ A System of Ancient Geography,” &c. Mr. Shiels, the principal collector and digester of the materials for the “ Lives of the Poets 1753,” to which the name of Mr. Theo. Cibber is prefixed ; Mr. Stewart, son of Mr. George Stewart, bookfeller in Edinburgh ; and a Mr. Maitland : the sixth was Mr. Peyton, a French master, who published some elementary tracts. The words, partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down, with spaces left between them, he delivered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations. The authorities were copied from the books themselves, in which he had marked the

passages with a black lead pencil, the traces of which could easily be effaced.

This year he contributed to the "Gentleman's Magazine," for May, five short poetical pieces. "A translation of a Latin Epitaph on Sir Thomas Hanmer," "To Miss ——, on her giving the author a gold and silk net-work purse of her own weaving," "Stella in Mourning," "The Winter's Walk," "An Ode," and "To Lyce, an elderly Lady," distinguished by three asterisks. In the Magazine for December, he inserted an *Ode on Winter*, which is one of the best of his lyric compositions.

In September, this year, his fortunate pupil, Garrick, having become joint-patentee and manager of Drury-lane theatre, he furnished him with a *Prologue* at the opening of it, which, for just and manly criticism, as well as for poetical excellence, is unrivalled in that species of composition.

In 1748, while he was employed in his *Dictionary*, he exerted his talents in occasional composition, very different from lexicography, and formed a club that met at Horsfeman's chop-house in Ivy-lane, Pater-noster Row, every Tuesday evening, with a view to enjoy literary discussion, and the pleasure of animated relaxation. The members associated with him in this little society, were his beloved friend, Dr. Richard Bathurst, a physician, Dr. Hawkefworth, Dr. Salter, father of the late master of the charter-house, Mr. Ryland, a merchant, Mr. John Payne, then a bookseller in Pater-noster Row, Mr. Samuel Dyer, a learned young man, intended for the dissenting ministry, Dr. William M'Ghie, a Scotch physician, Dr. Edmund Barker, a young physician, and Sir John Hawkins. The endowments of Mr. Dyer are represented by Sir John Hawkins as of such a superior kind, " that in some instances

Johnson might almost be said to have looked up to him." They used to dispute in this club, about the *moral sense* and the *fitness of things*, but Johnson was not uniform in his opinions; contending as often for victory as truth. This infirmity attended him through life.

In this year he published, in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for May, *The Life of Roscommon*, which has since been inserted in his "Lives of the Poets." He wrote also the *Preface* to Doddsley's "Preceptor," and the *Vision of Theodore, the Hermit of Teneriffe, found in his cell*, a most beautiful allegory of human life, under the figure of ascending the mountain of existence, which he himself thought the best of his writings.

In January 1749, he published *The Vanity of Human Wishes, being the tenth Satire of Juvenal imitated*, with his name. Of this poem, he composed seventy lines in one

day, without putting one of them upon paper till they were finished. He received of Doddsley, for the copy, only fifteen guineas. It has been thought to have less of common life, and more of a philosophic dignity than his *London*. It is characterized by profound reflection, more than pointed spirit. It has, however, always been held in high esteem, and is certainly as great an effort of ethic poetry as any language can show. The instances of the variety of disappointment are chosen so judiciously, and painted so strongly, that the moment they are read, they bring conviction to every thinking mind.

On the 8th of February this year, his tragedy of *Irene*, which had been long kept back for want of encouragement, was brought upon the stage at Drury-Lane, by the kindness of Garrick. A violent dispute arose between him and the manager, relative to the alterations necessary to be

made to fit it for the theatre. The poet for a long time refused to submit his lines to the critical amputation of the actor, and the latter was obliged to apply to Dr. Taylor to become a mediator in the dispute. Johnson's pride at length gave way to alterations; but whether to the full extent of the manager's wishes, is not known. Dr. Adams was present the first night of the representation, and gave Mr. Boswell the following account: "Before the curtain drew up, there were catcalls whistling, which alarmed Johnson's friends. The prologue, which was written by himself, in a manly strain, soothed the audience, and the play went off tolerably till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs. Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bow string round her neck. The audience cried out, "Murder! Murder!" She several times attempt-

ed to speak, but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive." This passage was afterwards struck out, and she was carried off to be put to death behind the scenes, as the play now has it. Mr. Boswell ascribes the epilogue to Sir William Yonge; but upon no good foundation.

In the unfavourable decision of the public upon his tragedy, Johnson acquiesced without a murmur. He was convinced that he had not the talents necessary to write successfully for the stage, and never made another attempt in that species of composition.

In December this year, he wrote the *Preface* and *Postscript* to Lauder's "Essay on Milton's Use, and Imitation of the Moderns, in his Paradise Lost," 8vo, a book made up of forgeries, and published to impose upon mankind. Sir John Hawkins tells us, that Johnson assisted Lauder

from motives of enmity to the memory of Milton; but it appears, that while Lauder's work was in the press, the proof sheets were submitted to the inspection of the Ivy-Lane Club. If Johnson approved of the design, it was no longer than while he believed it founded in fact. With the rest of the club, he was in one common error. As soon as Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, espoused the cause of truth, and with ability that will ever do him honour, dragged the impostor to open daylight, Johnson made ample reparation to the genius of Milton. He not only disclaimed the fraud, but insisted on the impostor confessing his offence; and for this purpose drew up a recantation, which Lauder signed and published, intituled, "A letter to the Rev. Mr. Douglas, occasioned by his Vindication of Milton," by William Lauder, M. A. 4to, 1751. The frankness of this confession would

have made some atonement for the baseness of the attempt, and its abject humility been deemed a sufficient punishment of the impostor, if that unhappy man had not had the folly and wickedness afterwards to deny this apology, and reassert his former accusation, in a pamphlet intitled, “King Charles Vindicated from the Charge of Plagiarism, brought against him by Milton, and Milton himself convicted of Forgery and a gross imposition on the Public,” 8vo, 1755. This effort of spleen and malice was also abortive; and Lauder soon afterwards retired to Barbadoes, where he died, as he had lived, an object of general contempt, in 1771.

On the 20th March 1750, he published the first paper of the *Rambler*, and continued it without interruption every Tuesday and Friday, till the 17th of March 1752, when it closed. In carrying on this periodical publication, he seems neither

to have courted, nor to have met with much assistance, the number of papers contributed by others amounting only to five in number, four billets in No. 10, by Mrs. Chapone, No. 30, by Mrs. Talbot, No. 97, by Richardson, and Nos. 44. and 100, by Miss Carter. These admirable essays, we are told by Mr. Boswell, were written in haste, just as they were wanted for the press, without even being read over by him before they were printed.

Making every allowance for powers far exceeding the usual lot of man, still there are bounds which we must set to our belief upon this head. It is not at every season that the mind can concentrate its faculties to a particular subject with equal strength, or that the fancy can create imagery spontaneously to adorn and enforce its reasonings. That Johnson sometimes selected his subject, culled his images, and arranged his arguments for these papers,

is evident from the notes of his commonplace book, preserved by Sir John Hawkins and Mr. Boswell. When he planned some essays with such minute carefulness, it is not likely that he trusted wholly to the sudden effusions of his mind for the remainder. Those which are taken from the notes of his commonplace book, do not manifest by an excellence superior to the rest, peculiar labours of mind in the conception, or pains in the composition; and we cannot suppose a man so happy in his genius, that the new-born offspring of his brain should invariably appear as strong and perfect as those which have been matured, fashioned, and polished by sedulous reflection. This, therefore, appears to be most probable, with respect to the wonderful faculty which he is said to have manifested in this and other of his works; that during his sleepless nights and frequent abstractions from company, he con-

ceived and sketched much of an impending work ; that though he had in some degree preconceived his materials, he committed nothing to paper, just as he is known to have done in composing his *Vanity of Human Wishes*. If this supposition strips the account of wonder, it invests it with probability, since a man of his powers of mind and habits of composition, might well write an essay at a fitting, and without a blot, when he had little more to attend to, than to clothe his conceptions in vigorous language, modulated into sonorous periods.

The *Rambler* was not successful as a periodical work, not more than five hundred copies of any one number having been ever printed. Of course, the bookseller, who paid Johnson four guineas a-week, did not carry on a very successful trade ; his generosity and perseverance are to be commended. While it was coming out

in single papers at London, Mr. James Elphinstone suggested, and took the charge of an edition at Edinburgh, which followed progressively the London publication; printed by Sands, Murray and Cochrane, with uncommon elegance, upon writing paper, of a duodecimo size, and was completed in eight volumes. Soon after the first folio edition was concluded, it was published in four octavo volumes; and Johnson lived to see a just tribute of approbation paid to its merit in the extensiveness of its sale, ten numerous editions of it having been printed in London, before his death, besides those of Ireland and Scotland.

This year he wrote a *Prologue*, which was spoken by Garrick, before the acting of "Comus," at Drury-Lane theatre, April 5, for the benefit of Mrs. Elizabeth Foster, Milton's grand-daughter, and the only surviving branch of his family, and

took a very zealous interest in the success of the charity. Tonson, the bookseller, gave 20l. and Dr. Newton brought a large contribution; yet all their efforts, joined to the allurements of Johnson's pen, and Garrick's performance, procured only 130l.

In 1751, while he was employed both on the *Rambler* and his *Dictionary*, he wrote the *Life of Cheynell*, in "The Student, or the Oxford and Cambridge Miscellany," a periodical work, in which Smart, Colman, Thornton, and other wits of both the universities, distinguished their talents.

Sir John Hawkins relates, that in the spring of this year, he indulged himself in a frolic of midnight revelry. This was to celebrate the birth of Mrs. Lennox's first literary child, the novel of "Harriet Stuart." He drew the members of the Ivy-Lane Club, and others, to the number of twenty, to the Devil Tavern, where

Mrs. Lennox and her husband met them. Johnson, after an invocation of the muses, and some other ceremonies of his own invention, invested the authoresses with a laurel crown. The festivity was protracted till morning, and Johnson through the night was a Bachanalian, without the use of wine.

Though his circumstances, at this time, were far from being easy, he received as a constant visitor at his house, Miss Anna Williams, daughter of a Welsh physician, and a woman of more than ordinary talents and literature, who had just lost her sight. She had contracted a close intimacy with his wife; and after her death, she had an apartment from him, at all times when he had a house. In 1755, Garrick gave her a benefit, which produced 200*l*. In 1766, she published a quarto volume of "Miscellanies," and thereby increased her little stock to 300*l*. This,

and Johnson's protection, supported her during the rest of her life.

In 1752, he republished his version of Pope's *Messiah*, in the Gentleman's Magazine. Soon after his closing the *Rambler*, March 2, he suffered a loss which affected him with the deepest distress. On the 17th of March, O. S. his wife died; and after a cohabitation of seventeen years, left him a childless widower, abandoned to sorrow, and incapable of consolation. She was buried in the chapel of Bromley in Kent, under the care of his friend, Dr. Hawkefworth, who resided at that place. In the interval between her death and burial, he composed a *funeral sermon* for her, which was never preached; but, being given to Dr. Taylor, has been published since his death. With the singularity of his prayers for *Tetty*, from that time to the end of his life, the world is sufficiently acquainted. By her first husband

she left a daughter, and a son, a captain in the navy, who, at his death, left 10,000*l.* to his sister.

On this melancholy event Johnson felt the most poignant distress. She is, however, reported not to have been worthy of this sincere attachment. Mrs. Desmoulins, who lived for some time with her at Hampstead, told Mr. Boswell, that she indulged herself in country air and nice living, at an unfuitable expence, while her husband was drudging in the smoke of London; that she was negligent of economy in her domestic affairs; and that she by no means treated him with that complacency which is the most engaging quality in a wife. But all this is perfectly compatible with his fondness for her; especially when it is remembered, that he had a high opinion of her understanding; and that the impression which her beauty, real, or imaginary, had originally made

upon his imagination, being continued by habit, had not been effaced, though she herself was, doubtless, much altered for the worse. Sir John Hawkins has declared himself inclined to think, "that if this fondness of Johnson for his wife was not dissembled, it was a lesson that he had learned by rote; and that when he practised it, he knew not where to stop, until he became ridiculous." To argue from her being much older than Johnson, or any other circumstances, that he could not really love her, is absurd; for love is not a subject of reasoning, but of feeling; and, therefore, there are no common principles upon which one can persuade another concerning it. That Johnson married her for love is believed. During her life he was fond and indulgent. At her death he was agonized; and, ever after, cherished her image as the companion of his most solemn hours. If seventeen years passed in

acts of tenderneſs during their union, and a longer period ſpent in regret after death had divided them, cannot fix our opinion that Johnſon's fondneſs was not the effect of diſſimulation, or the unfelt leſſon of a parrot, where ſhall we fix bounds to ſuſpicion, or place limits to the preſumption of man, in paſſing ſentence upon the feelings of his neighbour?

The following authentic and artleſs account of his ſituation after his wife's death, was given to Mr. Boſwell, by Francis Barbar, his faithful negro-ſervant, who was brought from Jamaica by Colonel Bathurſt, father of his friend Dr. Bathurſt, and came into his family about a fortnight after the diſmal event.

“ He was in great affliction :—Miſs Williams was then living in his houſe, which was in Gough-Square. He was buſy with his *Dictionary*; Mr. Shiels, and ſome others of the gentlemen who had formerly writ-

ten for him, used to come about him. He had then little for himself; but frequently sent money to Mr. Shiels, when in distress. The friends who visited him at that time, were chiefly Dr. Bathurst, and Mr. Diamond, an apothecary in Cork-Street, Burlington-Gardens, with whom he and Miss Williams generally dined every Sunday. There was a talk of his going to Ireland with him, which would probably have happened had he lived. There were also Mr. Cave, Dr. Hakesworth, Mr. Ryland merchant on Tower-hill, Mrs. Masters the poetess, who lived with Mr. Cave, Mrs. Carter, and sometimes Mrs. Macaulay; also Mrs. Gardiner, wife of a tallow-chandler in Snowhill, not in the learned way, but a worthy good woman; Mr. (now) Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Millar, Mr. Doddsley, Mr. Bouquet, Mr. Payne of Pater-noster Row, bookfeller; Mr.

Strahan the printer ; the Earl of Orrery, Lord Southwell, Mr. Garrick, &c.”

Johnson seems to have sought a remedy for this deprivation of domestic society, in the company of his acquaintance, the circle of which was now very extensive. Among his more intimate companions at this time, are to be reckoned, Dr. Bathurst, Dr. Hakesworth, Sir Joshua Reynolds; and Bennet Langton, Esq. and Topham Beauclerck, Esq. eldest son of Lord Sidney Beauclerck, young men of elegant manners, who conceived for him the most sincere veneration and esteem. Innumerable were the scenes in which he was amused by them, who, though their opinions and modes of life were different, formed an agreeable attachment.

Mr. Boswell has given the following account of an adventure of Johnson's, with his gay companions, which displays the author of the *Rambler* in a new light, and

shows that his conduct was not always so solemn as his essays.

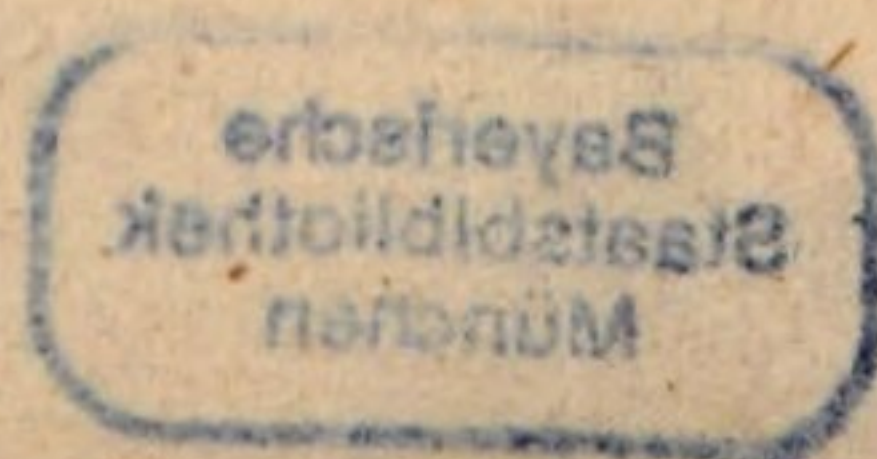
“ One night when Beauclerck and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till, at last, he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head, instead of a night cap, and a poker in his hand; imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good humour, agreed to their proposal. “ What! is it you, ye dogs! I’ll have a frisk with you.” He was soon dressed; and they sallied forth together into Covent-Garden, where the green grocers and fruiterers were begin-

G

ning to arrange their hampers just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *Bishop*, which Johnson had always liked; while in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,

Short, O short then be thy reign,
And give us to the world again!

“ They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerck and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day; but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young ladies.”



In the catalogue of Johnson's visitants, given by his servant, many are no doubt omitted; in particular, his humble friend Robert Levett, an obscure practiser in physic amongst the lower people, with whom he had been acquainted from the year 1746. Such was his predilection for him, and fanciful estimation of his moderate abilities, that he consulted him in all that related to his health, and "made him so necessary to him, as hardly to be able to live without him." He now drew him into a closer intimacy with him, and not long after, gave him an apartment in his house; of which he continued a constant inmate during the remainder of his life. He waited upon him every morning through the whole course of his tedious breakfast, and was seen generally no more by him till midnight. He was of a strange grotesque appearance; stiff and formal in his manner, and seldom said a word while any

company was present. He married, when he was near sixty, a street-walker, who persuaded him that she was a woman of family and fortune. His character was rendered valuable by repeated proofs of honesty, tenderness, and gratitude to his benefactor, as well as by an unceasing diligence in his profession. His single failing was an occasional departure from sobriety.

In a short time after the *Rambler* ceased, Dr. Hawkesworth projected the “*Adventurer*,” in connection with Bonnel Thornton, Dr. Bathurst and others. The first number was published, November 7. 1752, and the paper continued twice a-week, till March 9. 1754. Thornton’s assistance was soon withdrawn, and he set up a new paper, in conjunction with Colman, called the “*Connoisseur*.”

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the Earl of Orrery, of her “Shakspeare Illustrated,” 2 vols. 12mo.

The death of Mr. Cave, January 10. 1754, gave him an opportunity of shewing his regard for his early patron, by writing his *Life*, which was published in the “Gentleman’s Magazine” for February. This seems to have been the only new performance of that year, except his papers in the “Adventurer.” In the end of July, he found leisure to make an excursion to Oxford, for the purpose of consulting the libraries there. “He stayed,” says Mr. Warton, “about five weeks; but he collected nothing in the libraries for his *Dictionary*.”

As the *Dictionary* drew towards a conclusion, Chesterfield, who had previously treated Johnson with unpardonable neglect (which was the real cause of the breach between them, and not the commonly received story of Johnson’s being denied ad-

mittance while Cibber was with his lordship), now as meanly courted a reconciliation with him, in hopes of being immortalized in a dedication. With this view, he wrote two essays in “The World” in praise of the *Dictionary*, and, according to Sir John Hawkins, sent Sir Thomas Robinson to him, for the same purpose. But Johnson, who had not renounced the connection, but upon the just grounds of continued neglect, was sensible, that to listen to an accommodation, would be to exchange dignity for a friendship trifling in its value, and precarious in its tenure. He therefore rejected his advances, and spurned his proffered patronage, by the following letter, dated February 1755, which is preserved here as a model of courtly sarcasm, and manly reprehension, couched in terms equally respectful in their form, and cutting in their essence. It affords the noblest lesson to both authors and patrons

that stands upon record in the annals of literary history.

“ I have been lately informed by the proprietor of “ The World,” that two papers in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

“ When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*, that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending ; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship

in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing, which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

“ Seven years, my Lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time, I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

“ The Shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

“ Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has

reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind: but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

“ Having carried on my work thus far, with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long awakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,—
My Lord, your, &c.”

Johnson, however, acknowledged to Mr. Langton, that “ he did once receive ten pounds from Lord Chesterfield ; but that, as that was so inconsiderable a sum, he thought the mention of it could not properly find place in a letter of the kind that this was.” Chesterfield read the letter to Doddsley with an air of indifference, “ smiled at the several passages, and observed how well they were expressed.” He excused his neglect of Johnson, by saying, “ that he had heard he had changed his lodgings, and did not know where he lived ;” and declared, “ that he would have turned off the best servant he ever had, if he had known that he denied him to a man who would have been always more than welcome.” Of Chesterfield’s general affability and easiness of access, especially to literary men, the evidence is unquestionable ; but, from the character which he gave of Johnson, in his “ Letters to his

Son" [Let. 112.], and the difference in their manners, little union or friendship could be looked for between them. Certain it is, however, that Johnson remained under an obligation to Chesterfield, to the value of *ten pounds*.

On the 10th of February, previous to the publication of his *Dictionary*, the University of Oxford, in anticipation of the excellence of this work, at the solicitation of his friend Mr. Warton, unanimously conferred upon him the degree of Master of Arts; which, it has been observed, could not be obtained for him at an early period, but was now considered as an honour of considerable importance, in order to grace the title page of his *Dictionary*.

At length, in May following, his *Dictionary*, with a *Grammar* and *History of the English Language*, was published in 2 vols. folio; and was received by the learned world, who had long wished for its appear-

ance, with an applause proportionable to the impatience which the promise of it had excited. Though we may believe him, in the declaration at the end of his *Preface*, that he “ dismissed it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise ;” we cannot but suppose that he was pleased “ in the gloom of solitude,” with the honour it procured him, both abroad and at home. The Earl of Corke and Orrery, being at Florence, presented it to the *Accademia della Crusca*. That academy sent Johnson their *Vocabulario*, and the French Academy sent him their *Dictionnaire*, by Mr. Langton. As though he had foreseen some of the circumstances which would attend this publication, he observes, “ A few wild blunders and risible absurdities, from which no work of such multiplicity was ever free, may for a time furnish Folly with laughter, and harden Ignorance into contempt ;

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but useful Diligence will at last prevail, and there can never be wanting some who distinguish desert." Among those who amused themselves and the public on this occasion, Mr. Wilkes, in an Essay printed in the Public Advertiser, ridiculed the following passage in the *Grammar*. "H seldom, perhaps never, begins any but the first syllable." The position is undoubtedly expressed with too much latitude; but Johnson never altered the passage. Dr. Kenrick's threatened attack, several years after, in his Review of Johnson's *Shakspeare*, never saw the light. Campbell's ridicule of his style under the title of "Lexiphanes," 1767, and Callender's "Deformities of Dr. Johnson," 1782, though laughable, from the application of Johnson's "words of large meaning" to insignificant matters, are scarcely worthy of notice. His old pupil, Garrick, com-

plimented him on its coming out first, in the following “ Epigram,” alluding to the ill-success of the *forty* members of the French Academy employed in settling their language.

Talk of war with a Briton, he'll boldly advance
That one English soldier will beat ten of France :
Would we alter the boast, from the sword to the pen,
Our odds are still greater, still greater our men ;
In the deep mines of science, though Frenchmen
 may toil,
Can their strength be compar'd to Locke, Newton,
 and Boyle :
Let them rally their heroes, send forth all their powers,
Their verse-men, and prose-men ; then match them
 with ours ;
First Shakspeare and Milton, like gods in the fight,
Have put their whole drama and epic to flight ;
In satires, epistles, and odes would they cope,
Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope ;
And Johnson, well arm'd like a hero of yore,
Has beat *forty* French, and will beat forty more !

In this year, he afforded his assistance to Mr. Zechariah Williams, father of the blind lady whom he had humanely receiv-

ed under his roof, who had quitted his profession in hopes of obtaining the great parliamentary reward for the discovering of the longitude; and benevolently wrote for him, "An account of an attempt to ascertain the longitude at sea, by an exact theory of the variation of the magnetical needle; with a table of the variations at the most remarkable cities in Europe, from the year 1660, to 1860, 4to, by Zachariah Williams." This pamphlet was published in English and Italian, the translation being the work, as is supposed, of Mr. Baretti. Mr. Williams failed of success, and died July 12. 1755, in his 83d year. Johnson placed this pamphlet in the Bodleian library, and for fear of any omission or mistake, he entered, in the great catalogue, the title page of it, with his own hand. It appears from his correspondence with Mr. Warton, that he "intended, in the winter 1755, to open a *Biblio-*

theque, or Literary Journal, to be intituled, *The Annals of Literature, Foreign as well as Domestic*, for which he had made some provision of materials ; but the scheme was dropped.

Having spent, during the progress of the work, the money for which he had contracted to write his *Dictionary*, he was still under the necessity of exerting his talents, “ in making provision for the day that was passing over him.” The subscriptions taken in for his edition of *Shakespeare*, and the profits of his miscellaneous essays, were now his principal resource for subsistence ; and it appears from the following letter to Richardson, dated Gough-Square, March 16. 1756, that they were insufficient to ward off the distress of an arrest, on a particular emergency.

“ I am obliged to entreat your assistance ; I am now under an arrest for five pounds eighteen shillings. Mr. Strahan, from

whom I should have received the necessary help, in this case, is not at home, and I am afraid of not finding Mr. Millar. If you could be so good as to send me this sum, I will very gratefully repay you, and add it to all former obligations." In the margin of this letter, there is a memorandum in these words:—" March 16. 1756. Sent six guineas. Witness William Richardson."

" For the honour of an admired writer," says Mr. Murphy, " it is to be regretted that we do not find a more liberal entry." This anecdote may appear to support the parsimony of the author, whose hero gives most profusely; but something may still be said in favour of Richardson. All that Johnson asked was a temporary supply; and that was granted. There was certainly no ostentatious liberality; but a kind action seems to have been done, without delay, and without grudging.

In 1756, he published an abridgment of his *Dictionary*, in 2 vols, 8vo, and contributed to a publication called “The Universal Visitor,” for the assistance of Smart, one of the stated undertakers, with whose unhappy vacillation of mind he sincerely sympathized, all the essays marked with two *asterisks*; except the “Life of Chaucer,” “Reflections on the state of Portugal,” and “Essay on Architecture,” which want all the characteristical marks of his composition. “Further thoughts on Agriculture,” being the sequel of a very inferior essay on the same subject,” “A Dissertation on the State of Literature and Authors,” and “A Dissertation on the Epitaphs written by Pope,” though not marked in the same manner, appear to be the production of Johnson. The last of these, indeed, he afterwards added to his *Idler*.

He engaged also to superintend and contribute largely to another monthly publi-

cation, intituled, "The Literary Magazine, or Universal Review;" the first number of which came out on the 15th of May this year. He continued to write in it, with intermissions, till the 15th number. His original essays are, "The Preliminary Address," "An Introduction to the Political State of Great Britain," "Remarks on the Militia Bill," "Observations on his Britannic Majesty's Treaties with the Empress of Russia, and the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel," "Observations on the Present State of Affairs," and "Memoirs of Frederick II. King of Prussia." His reviews of the works of others are, "Birch's History of the Royal Society," "Murphy's Gray's-Inn Journal," "War-ton's Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope, vol. 1st." "Hampton's Translation of Polybius," "Blackwell's Memoirs of the Court of Augustus," "Ruffel's Natural History of Aleppo," "Sir Isaac New-

ton's Arguments in proof of a Deity,"
 " Borlase's History of the Isles of Scilly,"
 " Home's Experiments on Bleaching,"
 " Brown's Christian Morals," " Hales on
 Distilling Sea-Water, &c." " Lucas's Es-
 say on Waters," " Keith's Catalogue of
 the Scottish Bishops," " Browne's History
 of Jamaica," " Philosophical Transactions,
 vol. 49th," " *Mrs. Lenox's Translation of*
Sully's Memoirs," " Miscellanies by Eliza-
 beth Harrison," " Evans's Map, and Ac-
 count of the Middle Colonies in America,"
 " *Letter on the Case of Admiral Byng,*"
 " *Appeal to the People concerning Admiral*
Byng," " *Hanway's Eight Day's Journey,*
and Essay on Tea," " The Cadet, a Mili-
 tary Treatise," " *Some further Particulars*
in relation to the Case of Admiral Byng, by a
Gentleman of Oxford," " The Conduct of
 the Ministry relating to the present War,
 impartially examined," and " *Jenyns's Free*
Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil."

Mr. Davies, in his "Miscellaneous and Fugitive Pieces," has ascribed to him the "Review of Burke's Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime," and Sir John Hawkins has inserted it in his collection of Johnson's works; but it was written by Mr. Murphy. In his original essays, he displays extensive political knowledge, expressed with uncommon energy and perspicuity. Some of his reviews are very short accounts of the pieces noticed; but many of them are examples of elaborate criticism, in the most masterly style, particularly the review of Jenyns's "Inquiry into the Origin of Evil." In his defence of Tea, against Mr. Hanway's violent attack upon that popular beverage, he describes himself as "a hardened and shameless tea-drinker, who has for many years diluted his meals with only the infusion of this fascinating plant; whose kettle has scarcely time to cool; who with tea a-

muses the evening, with tea solaces the midnight, and with tea welcomes the morning," *te veniente die, te decedente*. Mr. Hanway wrote an angry answer to Johnson's review of his "Essay;" and Johnson, after a full and deliberate pause, made a reply to it; the only instance in the whole course of his life, when he condescended to oppose any thing that was written against him. Of the good Mr. Hanway he said, "He is a man whose failings may be well pardoned for his virtues."

The same year he gave an edition of Sir Thomas Browne's "Christian Morals," with his *Life* prefixed to it, which is one of his best biographical performances. He wrote also a *Dedication* and *Preface to the Earl of Rockford*, to Payne's "Essay on the Game of Draughts," and accepted of a guinea from Doddsley, for writing the *Introduction* to "The London Chronicle;"

and even in so slight a performance exhibited peculiar talents. At the same time he issued *Proposals* of considerable length for his edition of *Shakspeare*, with Notes; and his fancied activity was such, that he promised his work should be published before Christmas 1757, though it was nine years before it saw the light.

About this period, he was offered by Mr. Langton, the father of his much valued friend, a living of considerable value in Lincolnshire, if he would accept it and take orders; "but he chose not to put off his lay habit." This year the Ivy-Lane club was dissolved, by the dispersion of the members.

In 1757, it does not appear that he published any thing, except some of those essays in the "Literary Magazine," which have been mentioned. That magazine, after he ceased to write in it, gradually declined; and in July 1758, it expired.

He dictated, this year, a "Speech on the Subject of an Address to the Throne," after the expedition to Rochefort, which was delivered by one of his friends in a public meeting. It is printed in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for October 1785.

On the 15th of April 1758, he began *The Idler*, which came out every Saturday, in a weekly newspaper called the "Universal Chronicle," published by Newbery, and was continued till April 5th 1760. Of 103, the total number of essays, twelve were contributed by his friends; of which Nos. 33, 93. and 96, were written by Mr. Warton, No. 67 by Mr. Langton, and Nos. 76, 79, and 82, by Sir Joshua Reynolds; the concluding words of No. 82, "and pollute his canvass with deformity," being added by Johnson. *The Idler* is evidently the work of the same mind which produced the *Rambler*, but has less body and more spirit. It has more variety of

real life, and greater facility of language. Yet Nos. 14, 24, 41, 43, 51, 52, 58, and 89, shew as much profundity of thought, and labour of language, as any of his writings. To *The Idler*, when collected in volumes, he added (beside the *Essay on Epitaphs*, and the *Dissertation* on those of Pope), an *Essay on the Bravery of the English common Soldiers*.

In January 1759, his mother died, at the age of ninety; an event which deeply affected him. He regretted his not having gone to visit her for several years previous to her death; but he had long contributed liberally to her support.

Soon after this event, he wrote his *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, that, with the profits, he might defray the expence of his mother's funeral, and pay some little debts which she had left. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that he composed it in the evenings of one week, sent it to the press in

portions as it was written, and had never since read it over. He received for the copy 100l. and 25l. when it came to a second edition. The applause given to the history of *Rasselas*, has been such, as must satisfy an author the most avaricious of fame. It has been translated into various modern languages, and received the admiration of Europe.

During all this year, he carried on his *Idler*, and was proceeding, though slowly, in his edition of *Shakspeare*. He, however, found time to translate for Mrs. Lenox's English version of Brumoy's "Greek Theatre," "A Dissertation on the Greek Comedy," and the general "conclusion" of the book. On the controversy arising concerning the elliptical or circular form of arches for Blackfriar's bridge, Johnson engaged in it, on behalf of his friend Mr. Gwyn, and wrote *three letters* in the "Gazetteer," in opposition to the elliptical side

of the question ; but without any illiberal antipathy to Mr. Mylne, with whom he afterwards lived upon very agreeable terms of acquaintance.

While he was employed in writing *The Idler*, he quitted his house in Gough-Square, and retired to Gray's-Inn ; and soon after Miss Williams went to lodgings. This year he removed to chambers in the Inner-Temple Lane, " where he lived," says Mr. Murphy, " in poverty, total idleness, and the pride of literature, *Magni stat nominis umbra*. Mr. Fitzherbet (the father of Lord St. Helens), used to say, that he paid a morning visit to Johnson, intending from his chambers to send a letter into the city ; but, to his great surprise, he found an author by profession, without pen, ink, or paper."

His black servant Francis Barber having left him, and entered on board a man of war, " he was humble enough to desire

the assistance" of Smollet in procuring his release. Smollet made interest through Mr. Wilkes ; and he was discharged without any wish of his own, in the latter end of 1759, and returned to his master's service.

In 1760, he wrote the " Address of the Painters to George III. on his accession ;" an " Introduction" to the proceedings of the Committee for Clothing the French Prisoners ; the " Dedication" for Mr. Baret, of his " Italian and English Dictionary," to the Marquis of Abreu, the Spanish ambassador ; and an *Account of Mr. Tytler's Vindication of Mary Queen of Scots*, in the Gentleman's Magazine for October.

This year Mr. Murphy having thought himself ill treated by Dr. Franklin, in his " Dissertation on Tragedy," published an indignant vindication in " A Poetical Epistle to Samuel Johnson, A. M." in which he complimented Johnson in a just and

elegant manner. This epistle has been reprinted, with considerable alterations and additions, in the collection of his works, in 7 vols, 8vo, 1786. As an ingenious, an elegant, and moral writer, Mr. Murphy is entitled to rank in a superior class. In collecting his works, it is to be regretted that he should have taken so much pains to rescue from oblivion this epistle, written during the violence of literary dissension, and which bears evident marks of an exasperated mind. The expulsion of the respectable names of Dr. Warton and Mr. Mason from their former places, cannot easily be defended upon any other ground than caprice, or personal dislike.

An acquaintance first commenced between Johnson and Mr. Murphy in the following manner: During the publication of his "Gray's-Inn Journal," Mr. Murphy happened to be in the country

with Foote, and having mentioned that he was obliged to go to London to get ready for the press one of the numbers, Foote said to him, “ You need not go on that account : Here is a French magazine, in which you will find a very pretty oriental tale ; translate that, and send it to your printer.” Mr. Murphy having read the tale, was highly pleased with it, and followed Foote’s advice. When he returned to town, this tale was pointed out to him in the *Rambler*, from whence it had been translated into the French Magazine. Mr. Murphy then waited upon Johnson, to explain this curious incident ; and a friendship was formed, that continued without interruption till the death of Johnson.

In 1761, he wrote for the booksellers the “ Preface” to Rolt’s Dictionary of Trade and Commerce ; which displays a

clear and comprehensive knowledge of the subject, though he “ never (as he said) saw the man, and never read the book.” He also corrected a pamphlet written by Mr. Gwyn, intituled, “ Thoughts on the Coronation of George III.,” and wrote for Mr. Newbery the *Introduction* to a Collection of Voyages and Travels published by him, under the title of “ The World Displayed,” which contains, in a pleasing style, the history of navigation, and the discovery of America and the Islands of the West Indies.

In 1762, he wrote for Dr. Kennedy, in a strain of very courtly elegance, *A Dedication to the King*, of his “ Complete System of Astronomical Chronology,” “ Dedication” for Mrs. Lenox, to the Earl of Middlesex, of her “ Female Quixotte,” and the “ Preface” to the “ Catalogue of the Artist’s Exhibition.”

In this year, Fortune, who had hitherto left him to struggle with the inconveniences of a precarious subsistence, arising entirely from his own labours, gave him that independence which his talents and virtues long before ought to have obtained for him. In the month of July he was graced with a pension of 300*l. per annum*, by the King, as a recompence for the honour which the excellence of his writings, and the benefit which their moral tendency had been of to these kingdoms. He obtained it by the interference of Lord Bute, then first Lord Commissioner of the Treasury, upon the suggestion of Mr. Wedderburn, now Lord Loughborough, at the instance of Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Murphy. For this independence he paid the usual tax. Envy and resentment soon made him the mark to shoot their arrows at. Some appeared to think themselves more entitled to royal favour, and others recollected his

political opinions, and sentiments of the reigning family. By some he was censured as an apostate, and by others ridiculed for becoming a pensioner. The "North Briton" supplied himself with arguments against the Minister for rewarding a Tory and a Jacobite, and Churchill satirized his political versatility with the most poignant severity.

How to all principles untrue,
Not fix'd to old friends, nor to new;
He damns the pension which he takes,
And loves the Stuart he forsakes.

By this acceptance of the King's bounty, he had undoubtedly subjected himself to the appellation of a pensioner, to which he had annexed an ignominious definition in his *Dictionary*. He had received a favour from two Scotchmen, against whose country he had joined in the rabble cry of indiscriminating invective. It was thus that even-handed Justice commended the

poisoned chalice to his own lips, and compelled him to an awkward, though not unpleasant penance, for indulging in a sple-
netic prejudice, equally unworthy of his understanding and his heart.

The affair itself was equally honourable to the giver and the receiver. The offer was clogged with no stipulations for party services, and accepted under no implied idea of being recompensed by political writings. It was perfectly understood by all parties, that the pension was merely honorary. It is true that Johnson did afterwards write political pamphlets in favour of administration ; but it was at a period long subsequent to the grant of his pension, and in support of a minister to whom he owed no personal obligation. It was for the establishment of opinions, which, however unconstitutional, he had uniformly held, and publicly avowed.

In 1763, he furnished to "The Poetical Calendar," published by Fawkes and Woty, a *Character of Collins*, which he afterwards engrafted into his entire *Life of Collins*. He also favoured Mr. Hoole with the *Dedication* of his translation of Tasso to the Queen.

This year Mr. Boswell was introduced to Johnson, by Mr. Davies the bookseller, and continued to live in the greatest intimacy with him from that time till his death.

Churchill, in his "Ghost," availed himself of the common opinion of Johnson's credulity, and drew a caricature of him, under the name of *Pomposo*; representing him as one of the believers of the story of a ghost in Cock-Lane, which, in 1762, had gained very general credit in London. Johnson made no reply; "for with other wise folks he sat up with the ghost." Posterity must be allowed to smile at the cre-

dulity of that period. Contrary, however, to the common opinion of Johnson's credulity, Mr. Boswell asserts that he was a principal agent in detecting the imposture; and undeceived the world, by publishing an account of it in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for January 1762. Yet, by the circumstances of the examination, he seems to have gone with almost a willingness to believe, and a mind scarcely in suspense. He would have been glad to see a traveller from that undiscovered country, over which, like the rest of mankind, he saw nothing but clouds and darkness.

In one of the *conversations* at the Mitre Tavern this year, Mr. Boswell relates the following instance of Johnson's profound and liberal way of thinking, on a very nice constitutional point, which may, in some measure, render people cautious of pronouncing decisively on his political creed.

“ Goldsmith disputed very warmly with Johnson, against the well known maxim of the British constitution, “ The king can do no wrong,” affirming, that what was morally false, could not be politically true; and as the king might, in the exercise of his regal power, command, and cause the doing of what was wrong, it certainly might be said, in sense and in reason, that he *could* do wrong.” *Johnson*. “ Sir, you are to consider, that in our constitution, according to its true principles, the king is the head, he is supreme, he is above every thing, and there is no power by which he can be tried. Therefore it is, Sir, that we hold the king can do no wrong; that whatever may happen to be wrong in government may not be above our reach, by being ascribed to majesty. Redress is always to be had against oppression, by punishing the immediate agents. The king, though he should command, cannot force

a judge to condemn a man unjustly ; therefore it is the judge whom we prosecute and punish. Political institutions are formed on the consideration of what will most frequently tend to the good of the whole, although now and then exceptions may occur. Thus, it is better that a nation should have a supreme legislative power, although it may at times be abused. And then, Sir, there is this consideration, that, *if the abuse be enormous, nature will rise up, and claiming her original right, overturn a corrupt political system.*"

" This generous sentiment," Mr. Boswell adds, " which he uttered with great fervour, struck me exceedingly, and stirred my blood to that pitch of fancied resistance, the possibility of which I am glad to keep in mind, but to which, I trust, I shall never be forced."

In this year, he also wrote the " Life of Ascham," and the " Dedication to the Earl

of Shaftsbury," prefixed to the edition of his English works, published by Mr. Bennet.

To enlarge his circle, and to find opportunities for conversation, Johnson once more had recourse to a club. In February 1764, was founded that club, which afterwards became distinguished by the title of the LITERARY CLUB. Sir Joshua Reynolds was the first proposer, to which Johnson acceded; and the original members were, beside himself, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Burke, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Beauclerk, Mr. Langton, Mr. Chamier, Sir John Hawkins, and Goldsmith. They met at the Turk's Head, in Gerard Street, Soho, on every Monday evening through the year.

He wrote this year "A Review" of Granger's "Sugar Cane," in the "London Chronicle," in conjunction with Dr. Percy; and an account of Goldsmith's "Traveller," in the "Critical Review."

About this time, he was afflicted with a severe return of the hypochondriac disorder, which was ever lurking about him. He was so ill as to be entirely averse to society, the most fatal symptom of that malady.

The succeeding year, 1765, was remarkable for the commencement of his acquaintance with Henry Thrale, Esq. one of the most eminent brewers in England, and member of parliament for Southwark. Mr. Murphy, who was intimate with Mr. Thrale, having spoken very highly of Johnson's conversation, he was requested to make them acquainted. This being mentioned to Johnson, he accepted an invitation to dinner at Mr. Thrale's, and was so much pleased with his reception, both by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and they so much pleased with him, that his invitations to their house were more and more frequent; till at last, in 1776, he became one of the fa-

mily; and an apartment was appropriated to him, both in their house in Southwark, and in their villa at Streatham.

Nothing could be more fortunate for Johnson than this connection. He had at Mr. Thrale's all the comforts, and even the luxuries of life; his melancholy was diverted, and his irregular habits lessened, by association with an agreeable and well-ordered family. He was treated with the utmost respect, and even affection. Johnson had a very sincere esteem for Mr. Thrale, as a man of excellent principles, a good scholar, well-skilled in trade, of a sound understanding, and of manners such as presented the character of a plain independent English squire. He understood and valued Johnson, without remission, from their first acquaintance to the day of his death. Of Mrs. Thrale, now Mrs. Piozzi, a lady of lively parts, improved by education, "less cannot be said," says Mr. Tyers, "than

that in one of the latter opinions of Johnson :” “ If she was not the wisest woman in the world, she was undoubtedly one of the wittiest.” She took such care of him, during an illness of some continuance, that Goldsmith told her, “ he owed his life to her attention.” “ To a natural vivacity in conversation, she had reading enough, and the gods had made her poetical.” The vivacity of Mrs. Thrale’s literary talk roused him to cheerfulness and attention, even when they were alone. But this was not often the case ; for he found here a constant succession of what gave him the highest enjoyment. The society of the learned, the witty, and the eminent in every way, who were assembled in numerous companies, called forth his wonderful powers, and gratified him with admiration, to which no man could be insensible.

There is something in the conduct of this worthy possessor of wealth, which the mind

loves to contemplate. Next to the possession of great powers, the most enviable qualities, are a capacity to discover, and an inclination to honour them. To the credit of Thrale, let it be recorded, that the patron of literature and talents, of which Johnson fought in vain for the traces in Chesterfield, he found realized in Thrale.

In July of this year, he was complimented by the University of Dublin with the degree of Doctor of Laws, as the *Diploma* expresses it, *ob egregiam scriptorem elegantiam et utilitatem*, though he does not appear to have taken the title in consequence of it. In October, he at length gave to the world his edition of *The Plays of William Shakspeare, with the Corrections and Illustrations of various Commentators; to which are added, Notes by Sam. Johnson*, 8vo; which, as far as it fell short of affording that ample satisfaction which was expected from it, may be ascribed to his not having “read the books

which the author read, traced his knowledge to the source, and compared his copies with their originals;" a promise he gave, but was not able to perform. Sir John Hawkins thinks it a meagre work; he complains of the paucity of the notes, of Johnson's want of industry, and indeed unfitness for the office of a Scholiast. It was treated with great illiberality by Dr. Kenrick, in the first part of a "Review" of it, which was never completed. It is to be admitted, that he has neither so fully reformed the text, by accurate collations of the first editions, nor so fairly illustrated his author, in his notes, by quotations from the "writers who lived at the same time, immediately preceded, or immediately followed him," as has been done by other able and ingenious critics, who have followed him; Mr. Steevens, Mr. Capel, Mr. Malone, Mr. Reed, &c. whose labours have left little to add to the commentaries on

Shakspeare. But what he did as a commentator, has no small share of merit, though his researches were not so ample, and his investigations so acute as they might have been. He has enriched his edition with a concise account of each play, and of its characteristic excellence. In the sagacity of his emendatory criticisms, and the happiness of his interpretations of obscure passages, he surpasses every editor of this poet. Mr. Malone confesses, “ that Johnson’s vigorous and comprehensive understanding threw more light on his author, than all his predecessors had done.” His *Preface* has been pronounced by Mr. Malone, to be the finest composition in our language; and having regard to its subject and extent, it certainly would be difficult to name one possessing a superior claim to such superlative praise. Whether we consider the beauty and vigour of its composition, the abundance and classical selec-

tion of its allusions, the justness of the general precepts of criticism, and its accurate estimate of the excellencies or defects of his author, it is equally admirable. He seems to raise his talents upon a level with those of his poet, upon whose works he sits as a critical judge, to rival, by the lustre of his praises, the splendour of the original, and to follow this eagle of British poetry through all his gyres, with as keen an eye, and upon as strong a wing. The *Preface* to his *Dictionary*, correct as it is, must yield the palm of excellence to that prefixed to his *Shakespeare*; but it yields it only because the subject was less favourable to the full display of his powers.

In 1766, he removed from the Inner-Temple Lane, to a good house in Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, in which he accommodated Miss Williams with an apartment on the ground floor, while Mr. Levett occupied his post in the garret.

This year he only wrote the *Dedication to the King*, of Gwyn's "London and Westminster Improved," and furnished the *Preface*, and the following pieces for Miss Williams's "Miscellanies in Prose and Verse," 4to: *The Ant*; "To Miss —, on her giving the Author a Gold and Silk Network Purse of her own weaving;" "The Happy Life;" *On the Death of Stephen Gray, the Electrician*; and "The Fountains," a Fairy Tale, in Prose. The first sketch of the poem on *Stephen Gray*, was written by Miss Williams, but Johnson told Mr. Boswell, "that he wrote it all over again, except two lines." This publication was encouraged by a genteel subscription.

In 1767, he only wrote the *Dedication to the King*, for Mr. Adams's "Treatise on the Globes." In February, he was honoured by a private conversation with the king, in the library at Buckingham House, "which gratified his monarchic enthusiasm." The

interview was sought by the king without the knowledge of Johnson. His majesty, among other things, asked the author of so many valuable works, if he intended to publish any more? Johnson modestly answered, that he thought he had written enough. “And so should I too,” replied the king, “if you had not written so well.” Johnson was highly pleased with his majesty’s courteousness; and afterwards observed to Mr. Langton, “Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Lewis XIV. or Charles II.”

Johnson had now arrived at that eminence which is the prize that cultivated genius always struggles for, and but seldom obtains. His fortune, though not great, was adequate to his wants, and of most honourable acquisition; for it was derived from the produce of his labours, and the rewards which his country had bestowed upon merit. He received during life that

unqualified applause from the world, which is in general paid only to departed excellence, and he beheld his fame seated firmly in the public mind, without the danger of its being shaken by obloquy, or the hazard of its being shared by a rival. He could number among his friends the greatest and most improved talents of the country. His company was courted by wealth, dignity, and beauty. His many peculiarities were overlooked, or forgotten in the admiration of his understanding; while his virtues were regarded with veneration, and his opinions adopted with submission. Of the usual insensibility of mankind to living merit, Johnson, at least, had no reason to complain.

In 1768, nothing of his writing was given to the public, except the *Prologue* to his friend Goldsmith's comedy of the "Good Natured Man."

In 1769, he was altogether quiescent as an author. On the establishment of the Royal Academy this year, he accepted the title of Professor of Ancient Literature.

In 1770, he published a political pamphlet, intituled *The False Alarm*, 8vo.; intended to justify the conduct of ministry, and their majority in the House of Commons, for having virtually assumed it as an axiom, that the expulsion of a member of parliament was equivalent to exclusion, and their having declared Colonel Luttrell to be duly elected for the county of Middlesex, notwithstanding Mr. Wilkes had a great majority of votes. This being very justly considered as a gross violation of the right of election, an alarm for the constitution extended itself all over the kingdom. To prove this alarm to be false, was the purpose of Johnson's pamphlet; but his arguments and eloquence failed of effect, and the House of Commons has since erased the

offensive resolution from the journals. This pamphlet has great merit in point of language ; but it contains much gross misrepresentation, and much malignity, and abounds with such arbitrary principles, as are totally inconsistent with a free constitution.

The next year, 1771, he defended the measures adopted by the ministry, in the dispute with the court of Spain, in a pamphlet, intituled *Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting Falkland's Island*, 8vo. On the subject of Falkland's Islands, spots " thrown aside from human use, barren in summer, and stormy in winter," he appears to have followed the direction, and adopted the opinions which a pusillanimous administration wished to inculcate. They were certainly erroneous in a political view ; and if they were his own, shew, that on such subjects he was incapable of forming a just opinion. His description of

the miseries of war, in this pamphlet, is a fine piece of eloquence; and his character of *Junius* is executed with all the force of his genius, and with the highest care.

When Johnson shone in the plenitude of his political glory, from the celebrity of his ministerial pamphlets, an attempt was made to bring him into the House of Commons, by Mr. Strahan, the king's printer, who was himself in parliament, and wrote to the secretary of the treasury upon the subject; but the application was unsuccessful. Whether there were any particular reasons for the refusal, has not transpired. That Johnson very much wished to "try his hand" in the senate, he has himself declared; but that he would have succeeded as a parliamentary speaker, is at least doubtful. Few have distinguished themselves as orators, who have not begun the practice of speaking in public early in life; and it may be doubted whether the habits

of regular and correct composition are not unfavourable to that quick unpremeditated elocution, which is so much admired, and so useful in animated debate. This at least is certain, that of the many persons eminent for literary abilities, who have had seats in parliament, none have gained a reputation for eloquence commensurate with their talents and information ; and of Johnson, in particular, it is reported upon the authority of Sir William Scott, that he had several times tried to speak in the Society of Arts, &c. but “ had found that he could not get on.” It was observed by the late Henry Flood, Esq. who was himself an eminent orator, that “ Johnson having been long used to sententious brevity, and the short flights of conversation, might have failed in that continued and expanded kind of argument, which is requisite in stating complicated matters in public speaking.”

In 1772, he produced no literary performance. His only publication in 1773, was a new edition of his *Dictionary*, with additions and corrections. In the autumn of 1773, he gratified a “wish which he had so long entertained, that he scarcely remembered how it was formed, of visiting the Hebrides, or Western Islands of Scotland.” He was accompanied by Mr. Boswell, “whose acuteness,” he afterwards observed, “would help his inquiry, and whose gaiety of conversation, and civility of manners, were sufficient to counteract the inconveniencies of travel in countries less hospitable than those they were to pass.”

His stay in Scotland was from the 18th of August, till the 22d of November, when he set out on his return to London. His various adventures, and the force and vivacity of his mind, as exercised during his tour, have been described by Mr. Boswell, in his “*Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*,”

8vo, 1786, in a style that shows he possessed, in an eminent degree, the skill to give connection to miscellaneous matter, and vivacity to the whole of his narrative.

At the approach of the general election, in 1774, he published a short political pamphlet, intituled, *The Patriot; addressed to the Electors of Great Britain*, 8vo, not with any visible application to Mr. Wilkes, but to teach the people to reject the leaders of opposition, who called themselves patriots. It was called for, he tells us, by his political friends, on Friday, and was written on Saturday.

The first effort of his pen, in 1775, was “ Proposals for publishing by subscription, the works of Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, in 3 vols. 4to.” which was soon succeeded by a pamphlet, intituled, *Taxation no Tyranny, An Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress*, 8vo. The scope of the argument was, that distant colonies

which had in their assemblies a legislature of their own, were, notwithstanding, liable to be taxed in a British Parliament, where they had neither peers in one house, nor representatives in the other. The principle has been long abandoned; but Johnson was of opinion, that this country was strong enough to enforce obedience; "When," says he "an Englishman is told that the Americans shoot up like a hydra, he naturally considers how the hydra was destroyed." The event has shown how much he was mistaken. This pamphlet was written at the desire of the ministry, and in some places corrected by them. It contained the same positive assertions, sarcastical severity, extravagant ridicule, and arbitrary principles, with his former political pieces, and the grossest and most virulent abuse of the Americans.

These pamphlets were published on his own account, and were afterwards collect-

ed by him into a volume, under the title of *Political Tracts, by the author of the Rambler*, 8vo, 1775.

In the month of March this year, he was gratified by the title of Doctor of Laws, conferred on him by the University of Oxford, at the solicitation of Lord North. In September he visited France, for the first time, with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and Mr. Baretti; and returned to England in about two months after he quitted it. Foote, who happened to be in Paris at the same time, said, that the French were perfectly astonished at his figure and manner, and at his dress; which was exactly the same with what he was accustomed to in London: his brown clothes, black stockings, and plain shirt. Of the occurrences of this tour, he kept a journal, in all probability with a design of writing an account of it. The world has to regret, that from

want of leisure or inclination, he never perfected it.

This year he also wrote the Preface to Mr. Baretti's "Lessons, Italian and English," and published an account of his Tour to the Hebrides, under the title of *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, 8vo. This elegant narrative has been variously praised and abused in the newspapers, magazines, and other fugitive publications. It was formally attacked by the Rev. Donald M'Nicol, in his "Remarks," &c. 8vo. 1780. That it is written with an undue prejudice against both the country and people of Scotland, must be allowed; but it abounds in extensive philosophical views of society, and in ingenious sentiments and lively description. Among many other disquisitions equally instructing and amusing, he expresses his disbelief of the authenticity of the poems of Ossian, presented to the public as a translation from the

Erse, in such terms as honest indignation is apt to hurl against imposition. If there was a manuscript, in what age was it written? and where is it? If it was collected from oral recitation in different parts of the Highlands, who put it together in its present form? These, and such like observations, provoked the resentment of Mr. Macpherson; he sent a threatening letter to the author, and Johnson answered him in the rough phrase of stern defiance.

“ I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me, I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

“ What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which

I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals, inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but what you shall prove. You may print this if you will."

The threats alluded to in this letter never were attempted to be put in execution. But Johnson, as a provision for defence, furnished himself with a large oaken plant, six feet in height, of the diameter of an inch at the lower end, increasing to three inches at the top, and terminating in a head (once the root) of the size of a large orange. This he kept in his bed-chamber, so near his chair, as to be within his reach.

In 1776, he wrote nothing for the public. This year he removed from No. 7. Johnson's Court, to a larger house, No. 8. Bolt-Court, Fleet-Street, with a garden, "which he took delight in watering." A

room on the ground-floor was assigned to Miss Williams; and the whole of the two pair of stairs floors was made a repository for his books, consisting of about 5000 volumes. Here, in the intervals of his residence at Streatham, he sat every morning receiving visits, and hearing the topics of the day, and indolently trifling away the time; and to the most intimate of his friends, Dr. Burney, Mr. Hoole, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Davies, Mr. Baretti, Mr. Boswell, Mr. Langton, &c. sometimes gave not inelegant dinners. Chemistry afforded some amusement. In Gough-Square, and in Johnson's-Court, he had an apparatus for that purpose; and the same, with perhaps a few additions, was now fixed up in Bolt-Court. He had also a sort of laboratory at Streatham, and diverted himself with drawing essences, and colouring liquors for Mrs. Thrale.

Johnson's benevolence to the unfortunate, was, at all periods of his life, very remarkable. In his house at Bolt-Court, an apartment was appropriated to Mrs. Desmoulins, daughter of his god-father, Dr. Swinfen, and widow of Mr. Desmoulins, a writing-master, and her daughter, and a Miss Carmichael. Such was his humanity, and such his generosity, that he allowed Mrs. Desmoulins half-a-guinea a-week, which was above a twelfth part of his pension.

“ It seems,” says Mrs. Piozzi, “ at once vexatious and comical, to reflect that the dissensions those people chose to live in, distressed and mortified him exceedingly. He really was oftentimes afraid of going home, because he was sure to be met at the door with numberless complaints; and he used frequently to lament pathetically to me, and to Mr. Sastres, the Italian master, who was much his favourite, that they made his

life miserable, from the impossibility he found of making theirs happy ; when every favour he bestowed on one, was wormwood to the rest. If, however, I ventured to blame their ingratitude, and condemn their conduct, he would instantly set about softening the one, and justifying the other ; and finished commonly by telling me, that I knew not to make allowances for situations I never experienced :

To thee no reason, who know'st only good,
But evil hast not try'd. *Milton.*"

In 1777, the fate of Dr. Dodd excited Johnson's compassion, and called forth the strenuous exertion of his vast comprehensive mind. He thought his sentence just ; yet, perhaps, fearing that religion might suffer from the errors of one of its ministers, he endeavoured to prevent the last ignominious spectacle. He wrote for that unhappy man, his *Speech to the Recorder of*

London, at the Old Bailey, when the sentence of death was about to be pronounced upon him; *The Convict's Address to his unhappy Brethren*, a sermon delivered by him in the chapel of Newgate; two *Letters*, one to Lord Chancellor Bathurst, and one to Lord Mansfield; *A Petition from Dr. Dodd to the King*; *A Petition from Mrs. Dodd to the Queen*; *Observations* in the newspapers on occasion of Earl Percy's having presented a petition for mercy to Dodd, signed by twenty thousand people; *A Petition from the City of London*; and Dr. Dodd's *Last Solemn Declaration*, which he left with the sheriff at the place of execution.

In the summer, he wrote a *Prologue* to Kelly's comedy of "A Word to the Wife," acted at Covent-Garden Theatre, for one night, for the benefit of the author's widow and children. He also made some *additions* to the life of Bishop Pearce (who assisted him with some etymologies in the

compilation of his Dictionary), prefixed to his posthumous works, in 2 vols. 4to, and wrote the *Dedication to the King*.

This year he engaged to write a concise account of the *Lives of the English Poets*, whose works were inserted in an edition undertaken by the London bookfellers, at that time, in opposition to the edition of the “British Poets,” printing by the Martins at Edinburgh, and to be sold by Mr. Bell in London. As a recompence for an undertaking, as he thought, “not very tedious or difficult,” he bargained for two hundred guineas; and was afterwards presented by the proprietors with one hundred pounds. His design was only to have allotted to every poet an *Advertisement*, like that which we find in the French miscellanies, containing a few dates, and a general character, which would have conferred not much reputation upon the writer, nor have communicated much information to

his readers. Happily for both, “ the honest desire of giving useful pleasure,” led him beyond his first intention. In executing this limited design, he found his attention so much engaged, that he enlarged his scheme, and entered more fully into the merits and value of the principal writers; and produced an ample, rich, and entertaining view of them in every respect. The first four volumes of this work were published in 1779, under the title of *Biographical and Critical Prefaces*, and the remaining five in 1781. “ Some time in March,” he says, in his *Meditations*, “ I finished the *Lives of the Poets*, which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily; unwilling to work, and working with vigour and haste.” In a memorandum previous to this, he says of them: “ Written, I hope, in such a manner, as may tend to the promotion of piety.”

In the selection of the poets he had no responsible concern; but Blackmore, Watts, Pomfret, and Yalden, were inserted by his recommendation; and Mr. Nichols tells us, he was frequently consulted during the printing of the collection, and revised many of the sheets.

This was the last of Johnson's literary labours; and though completed when he was in his seventy-first year, shows that his faculties were in as vigorous a state as ever. His judgment and his taste, his quickness in the discrimination of motives, and facility of moral reflection, shine as strongly in these narratives, as in any of his more early performances; and his style, if not so energetic, is at least more smoothed down to the taste of the generality of critical objectors.

The *Lives of the English Poets* formed a memorable era in Johnson's life. It is a work which has contributed to immor-

talize his name, and has secured that rational esteem which party or partiality could not procure, and which even the injudicious zeal of his friends has not been able to lessen.

From the close of his last great work, the malady that persecuted him through life, came upon him with redoubled force. His constitution declined fast, and the fabric of his mind seemed to be tottering. The contemplation of his approaching end was constantly before his eyes; and the prospect of death, he declared, was terrible.

On the 4th of May 1781, he lost his valuable friend Thrall, who appointed him one of his executors, with a legacy of 200l. "I felt," he said, "almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that, for fifteen years, had never been turned upon me but with respect and benignity." Of his departed

friend he has given a true character in a Latin *Epitaph*, to be seen in the church of Streatham.

With Thrale, many of the comforts of Johnson's life may be said to have expired. In the course of 1782, he complains that he "passed the summer at Streatham, but there was no Thrale." In the same year, he received another shock. He was suddenly deprived of his old domestic companion Levett, and paid a tribute to his memory in an affecting and characteristic *Elegy*.

The successive losses of those acquaintances whom kindness had rendered dear, or habit made necessary to him, reminded Johnson of his own mortality.

After the death of Thrale, his visits to Streatham, where he no longer looked upon himself as a welcome guest, became less and less frequent; and on the 5th of April 1783, he took his final leave of Mrs. Thrale,

to whom, for near twenty years, he was under the highest obligations.

“ The original reason of our connection,” says Mrs. Piozzi, in her lively and entertaining “ Anecdotes,” his *particularly disordered health and spirits*, had been long at an end. Veneration for his virtues, reverence for his talents, delight in his conversation, and habitual endurance of a yoke my husband first put upon me, and of which he contentedly bore his share for sixteen or seventeen years, made me go on so long with Mr. Johnson ; but the perpetual confinement, I will own to have been terrifying in the first years of our friendship, and irksome in the last ; nor would I pretend to support it without help, when my coadjutor was no more.”

A friendly correspondence continued, however, between Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, without interruption, till the summer following, when she retired to Bath, and in-

formed him, that she was going to dispose of herself in marriage to Signior Piozzi, an Italian music master. Johnson, in his relation of executor to her husband, as also in gratitude to his memory, was under an obligation to promote the welfare of his family. He endeavoured, therefore, by prudent counsels and friendly admonition, to prevent that which he thought one of the greatest evils which could befall the children of his friend, the alienation of the affections of their mother. “ The answer to his friendly monition,” says Sir John Hawkins, “ I have seen ; it is written from Bath, and contains an indignant vindication, as well of her conduct as her fame, an inhibition of Johnson from following her to Bath, and a farewell, concluding, “ Till you have changed your opinion of ———, let us converse no more.” In his last letter, 8th July 1784, directed to Mrs. *Piozzi*, who then had announced her mar-

riage to him, he says, “ I breathe out one sigh more of tenderness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere.” He gives her his best advice, and adds, “ the tears stand in my eyes.”

Excluded from the dwelling and family of his friend, he was compelled to return to his own house, to spend cheerless hours among the objects of his bounty, when increasing age and infirmities had made their company more obnoxious than when he left them, and the society of which he had been recently deprived, rendered him, by comparison, less patient to endure it.

From this time, the narrative of his life is little more than a recital of the pressures of melancholy and disease, and of numberless excursions, taken to calm his anxiety, and soothe his apprehensions of the terrors of death, by flying, as it were, from himself. He was now doomed to feel all those calamities incident to length of days, which

he had so eloquently enumerated in his *Vanity of Human Wishes*.

On the 17th of June 1783, he was afflicted with a paralytic stroke, which deprived him of speech; from which, however, he gradually recovered; so that in July he was able to make a visit to Mr. Langton, at Rochester; and made little excursions, as easily as at any time of his life.

In September, while he was on a visit at Heale, the seat of Mr. Bowles, in Wiltshire, he lost Mrs. Williams, whose death he lamented with all the tenderness which a long connection naturally inspires. This was another shock to a mind like his, ever agitated with the dread of his own dissolution.

Besides the palsy, he was all this year afflicted with the gout, as well as with a *sarcocele*, which he bore with uncommon firmness.

In December, he sought a weak refuge from anxiety, in the institution of a week-

ly club, at the Essex Head, in Essex Street, then kept by an old servant of Mr. Thrale's; but the amusement which he promised himself from this institution, was but of short duration.

In the beginning of the year 1784, he was seized with a spasmodic asthma, which was soon accompanied by some degree of dropsy. From the latter of these complaints, however, he was greatly relieved by a course of medicine.

The interval of convalescence, which he enjoyed during the summer, induced him to express a wish to visit Italy. Upon this subject, however, his wishes had been anticipated by the anxiety of his friends to preserve his health. His pension not being deemed by them adequate to support the expence of the journey, application was made to the minister, by Mr. Boswell and Sir Joshua Reynolds, unknown to Johnson, through Lord Chancellor Thurlow, for an

augmentation of it, by 200l. The application was unsuccessful; but the Chancellor, in the handsomest manner, offered to let him have 500l. from his own purse, under the appellation of a loan, but with the intention of conferring it as a present. It is also to be recorded to the honour of Dr. Brocklesby, that he offered to contribute 100l. per annum, during his residence abroad. Johnson, however, declined both these offers, with a gratitude and dignity of sentiment, rising almost to an equal elevation with the generosity of Lord Thurlow, and Dr. Brocklesby; and, indeed, he was now approaching fast to a state in which money could be of no avail.

In the beginning of July, he set out on a visit to Dr. Taylor, at Ashbourn in Derbyshire, where his complaints appear to have met with but little alleviation. From Derbyshire he proceeded to Litchfield, to take a last view of his native city. After leaving Litchfield, he visited Birmingham and

Oxford, and arrived in London on the 16th of November.

The fine and firm feelings of friendship which occupied so large a portion of Johnson's heart, were eminently displayed, in the many tender interviews which took place between him and his friends in the country, during his excursion into the North: an excursion which seems to have been undertaken rather from a sense of his approaching dissolution, and a warm wish to bid those he loved a last and long farewell, than from any rational hope that air and exercise would restore him to his former health and vigour.

Soon after his return to London, both the asthma and dropsy became more violent and distressful. Eternity presented to his imagination an awful prospect, and with as much virtue as in general is the lot of man, he shuddered at the approach of his dissolution. He felt strong perturbations of mind.

His friends endeavoured all in their power to awaken the comfortable reflections of a life well spent. They prayed with him ; and Johnson poured out occasionally the warmest effusions of piety and devotion.

He had for some time kept a journal in Latin of the state of his illness, and the remedies which he used, under the title of *Ægri Ephemeris*, which he began on the 6th July, but continued it no longer than the 8th November, finding, perhaps, that it was a mournful and unavailing register.

His attention to the cause of literature was evinced, among other circumstances, by his communicating to Mr. Nichols a list of the original authors of " The Universal History," mentioning their several shares in that work. It has, according to his direction, been deposited in the " British Museum," and is printed in the Gentleman's Magazine for December 1784. His integrity was evinced, by paying a small debt

to Mr. Faden, which he had borrowed of his father, and a larger one to Mr. Hamilton. But the question will recur, why were these debts so long suffered to remain? for we cannot suppose that his mind was suddenly enlightened, and his memory renovated.

During his sleepless nights, also, he amused himself by translating into Latin verse, from the Greek, many of the *Epigrams* in the *Anthologia*.

The sense of his situation predominated, and “his affection for his departed relations,” says Mr. Boswell, “seemed to grow warmer, as he approached nearer to the time when he might hope to see them again.” In a letter to Mr. Green, at Litchfield, 2d December 1784, he enclosed the *Epitaph* on his father, mother, and brother, and ordered it to be engraved on a stone, “deep, massy, and hard,” and laid on “the exact place of interment,” in the middle

aisle of St. Michael's church. In the Summer he laid a stone with a Latin *Epitaph* over his wife in the chapel of Bromley, in Kent.

During his illness, he experienced the steady and kind attachment of his numerous friends. Nobody was more attentive to him than Mr. Langton, to whom he tenderly said, *Te teneam moriens, deficiente manu.* Dr. Heberden, Dr. Brocklesby, Dr. Warren, Dr. Butter, and Mr. Cruikshank, generously attended him without accepting any fees; and all that could be done from professional skill and ability, was done, to prolong a life so truly valuable. But his constitution was decayed beyond the restorative powers of the medical art. Unfortunately for him, he himself had a smattering of the medical science; and imagining that the dropical collection of water which oppressed him, might be drawn off, by mak-

ing incisions in the calves of his legs, with his usual defiance of pain, cut deep, when he thought Mr. Cruikshank had done it too tenderly. An effusion of blood followed, which brought on a dozing. Previous to his dissolution, he burnt indiscriminately large masses of paper, and among others, two quarto volumes, "containing a full and most particular Account of his own Life," the loss of which is much to be regretted. The last days of this great man's existence appear to have been unclouded by the gloomy apprehensions which he had formerly entertained. Full of resignation, strengthened in faith, and joyful in hope, on the 13th of December, in the evening, being in the 75th year of his age, he resigned his breath with so much composure, that his death was only known by the ceasing of his respiration, which had been rendered difficult by debility and asthma. He was buried in Westminster-Abbey, near the

foot of Shakspeare's monument, and close to the coffin of his friend Garrick. His funeral was attended by a respectable number of his friends; particularly by many of the members of the LITERARY CLUB, who were then in town, and several of the reverend Chapter of Westminster. His school-fellow and friend, Dr. Taylor, read the funeral service. Agreeable to his own request, a large blue flag-stone was placed over his grave, with this inscription:

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.

Obiit XIII die Decembris

Anno Domini

MDCCLXXXV.

Ætatis suæ LXXV.

A monument for Johnson, in the Cathedral church of St. Paul's, in conjunction with the illustrious Howard, was resolved upon, with the approbation of the Dean and Chapter, in 1789, and has been sup-

ported by a most respectable contribution. It is in such forwardness, that it is expected to be opened in October 1795.

Having no near relations, he left the bulk of his property, amounting to 1500l. to his faithful servant, Francis Barber, whom he looked upon as particularly under his protection, and whom he had all along treated as an humble friend. He appointed Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir John Hawkins, and Dr. (now Sir) William Scott, his executors.

His death attracted the public attention in an uncommon degree, and was followed by an unprecedented accumulation of literary honours, in the various forms of Sermons, Elegies, Memoirs, Lives, Essays, and Anecdotes. A sermon on that event was preached before the University of Oxford, by Mr. Augutter; and Dr. Fordyce, in his "Addresses to the Deity," 12mo, 1785, and an "Epitaph" printed in the "Gen-

tleman's Magazine" for 1785, paid an elegant and affectionate tribute to his memory. The "Elegy on the Death of Dr. Johnson," by Samuel Hobhouse, Esq. 4to, 1785, was distinguished from the mass of elegiac verses on that occasion; and the just, discriminative, and elegant "Poetical Review of the Moral and Literary Character of Dr. Johnson," by John Courtenay, Esq. M. P. 4to, 1788, was perused with avidity by the admirers of wit and learning, and the real friends of virtue and liberty. His conduct and genius were examined and illustrated in the rapid "Biographical Sketch of Dr. Johnson," by Thomas Tyers, Esq. in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1784; the sprightly and entertaining "Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson," by Mrs. Piozzi, 8vo, 1785; the candid and judicious "Essay on the Life, Character, and Writings of Dr. Johnson," by Joseph Towers, LL. D. 8vo, 1786; and the instructive and inte-

resting "Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D." by James Boswell, Esq. 2 vols. 4to, 1791, which are sufficiently known to the world.

His *Works* were collected and published by Sir John Hawkins, with his "Life," in eleven volumes, 1787. In this edition, the *Lives of the Poets* are placed first, and several pieces are attributed to Johnson without foundation. In the "Life," too much foreign matter is intermixed, and Johnson himself is scarcely visible in the mass. A new edition was published in 12 vols. 8vo, 1792, with an "Essay on his Life and Genius," by Arthur Murphy, Esq., the former "Life" being thought too unwieldy for republication. In this edition, the order observed in the former edition is inverted, and the several pieces are chronologically arranged, omitting those attributed to him without foundation. Some of his *Prayers* are printed, and several of his *Letters* added to the 12th volume. Mr. Murphy has

no new facts to embellish his work ; but the task which has been left him, of giving a short, yet full, a faithful, yet temperate history of Johnson, has been ably executed. In the succinct review of his writings, Mr. Murphy displays his own learning, judgment, and taste. His *Prayers and Meditations* were published from his manuscripts, by George Strahan, A. M. Vicar of Islington, in 8vo, 1785. *Letters to and from Samuel Johnson, LL. D.* were published by Mrs. Piozzi, in 2 vols. 8vo, 1788. The *Sermons* 8vo, 1790, left for publication, by Dr. Taylor, were unquestionably Johnson's ; and the fact is now ascertained on the authority of Mr. Hayes, the editor. An imperfect collection of his *Poems* was published by Kearsley, in 12mo, 1785 ; and inserted, with considerable additions, in the edition of " The Works of the English Poets," 1790. They are reprinted in the present collection, together with the tragedy of

Irene, and several additional pieces collected from Mr. Boswell's "Life of Johnson," and other publications.

The religious, moral, political, and literary character of Johnson, will be better understood by this account of his life, than by any laboured and critical comments. Yet it may not be superfluous here to attempt to collect, into one view, his most prominent excellencies, and distinguishing particularities.

His figure and manner are more generally known than those of almost any other man. His person was large, robust, and unwieldy from corpulency. His carriage was disfigured by sudden emotions which appeared to a common observer to be involuntary and convulsive. But in the opinion of Sir Joshua Reynolds, they were the consequence of a depraved habit of accompanying his thoughts with certain untoward actions, which seemed as if they were

meant to reprobate some part of his past conduct. Of his limbs, he is said never to have enjoyed the free and vigorous use. When he walked, it seemed the struggling gait of one in fetters; and when he rode, he appeared to have no command over his horse. His strength, however, was great, and his personal courage no less so. Among other instances, which exemplify his possession of both, it is related, that, being once at the Litchfield theatre, he sat upon a chair placed for him beside the scenes. Having had occasion to quit his seat, he found it occupied, upon his return, by an innkeeper of the town. He civilly demanded that it should be restored to him; but meeting with a rude refusal, he laid hold of the chair, and with it, of the intruder, and flung them both, without further ceremony, into the pit. At another time, having engaged in a scuffle with four men in the street, he resolutely refused to

yield to superior numbers, and kept them all at bay, until the watch came up and carried him and his antagonists to the watch-house. In his dress he was singular and slovenly; and though he improved somewhat under the lectures of Mrs. Thrale, during his long residence at Streatham, yet he was never able completely to surmount particularity. He never wore a watch till he was sixty years of age, and then caused one to be made for him by Mudge and Dutton, which cost him seventeen guineas, with this inscription on the dial-plate, "For the night cometh." He was fond of good company, and of good living; and, to the last, he knew of no method of regulating his appetites, but absolute restraint or unlimited indulgence. "Many a day," says Mr. Boswell, "did he fast; many a year refrain from wine: but when he did eat, it was voraciously; when he did drink wine, it was copiously. *He could practise absti-*

nence, but not temperance." In conversation, he was rude, intemperate, overbearing, and impatient of contradiction. Addicted to argument, and greedy of victory, he was equally regardless of truth and fair reasoning in his approaches to conquest. "There is no arguing with him," said Goldsmith, alluding to a speech in one of Cibber's plays; "for if his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it." In the early part of his life, he had been too much depressed; in his latter years, too lavishly indulged. His temper had at first been soured by disappointment and penury, and his petulance was afterwards flattered by universal submission. In his conversation and goodness of heart, his friends met with a recompense for that submission which the sovereignty of his genius challenged, and his temper exacted from them to the uttermost. To great powers, he united a perpetual and ardent desire to ex-

cel; and even in an argument on the most indifferent subject, he generally engaged with the whole force and energy of his great abilities. Of his conversation, it is true, all that has been retained by Mr. Boswell, does not seem to be worth recording. Judging of it most favourably, it is not much distinguished by the flashes of wit, or the strokes of humour. Where he appears serious, we are not always sure that he speaks the sentiments of his conviction. Mr. Boswell allows that he often talked for victory, and sometimes took up the weaker side, as the most ingenious things could be said on it. Truth, and the ablest defences of truth, are mixed with error, and the most ingenious glosses which ingenuity could invent, or address enforce. Authors are exalted, or depreciated, as the moment of hilarity or gloom was connected with the subject, or as the opinion of the speaker was adverse; and the whole is given as the sen-

timent of Johnson. But for the inferiority of his conversation, to our opinion of the man, he has himself made a prophetic apology, in his first interview with his biographer, who was destined to retail it. "People may be taken in once, who imagine that an author is greater in private life than another man. Uncommon parts require uncommon opportunities for their exertions."

With these defects, there was, however, scarcely a virtue of which he was not in principle possessed. He was humane, charitable, affectionate, and generous. His most intemperate fallies were the effects of an irritable habit; he offended only to repent. To the warm and active benevolence of his heart, all his friends have borne testimony. "He had nothing," says Goldsmith, "of the bear, but his skin." Misfortune had only to form her claim, in order to found her right to the use of his

purse, or the exercise of his talents. His house was an asylum for the unhappy, beyond what a regard to personal convenience would have allowed ; and his income was distributed in the support of his inmates, to an extent greater than general prudence would have permitted. The most honourable testimony to his moral and social character, is the cordial esteem of his friends and acquaintances. He was known by no man by whom his loss was not regretted. Another great feature of his mind, was the love of independence. While he felt the strength of his own powers, he despised, except in one instance, pecuniary aid. His pension has been often mentioned, and subjected him to severe imputations. But let those, who, like Johnson, had no patrimony, who were not always willing to labour, and felt the constant recurrence of necessities, reject, without an adequate reason, an independent income,

which left his sentiments free, and required neither the servility of adulation, nor the labours of service. It is not uncommon to see a desire to be independent, degenerate into avarice. Johnson did not feel it early, for his benevolence counteracted it ; but he declined going into Italy, when worth 1500l. besides his pension, because of the expence ; and we see the surly dignity, which formerly spurned at an obligation, relaxed, in his refusal of Dr. Brocklesby's assistance, and Lord Thurlow's very delicate offer of the same kind. Some little censure is due to him for his easy faith, occasioned by his political prejudices, in the forgeries of Lauder. That he should have appeared in public, in company with this defamer of Milton, is to be lamented. Yet his renunciation of all connection with Lauder, when his forgeries were detected, is only a proof of his having believed (a common weakness of worthy minds), with-

out examination, not that he was an accomplice with the impostor,

If there is any one trait by which Johnson's mind can be discriminated, it is gigantic vigour. In information and taste he was excelled; but what he seriously attempted, he executed with that masterly original boldness, which leaves us to regret his indolence, that he exerted himself only in the moment when his powers were wanting, and relapsed again into his literary idleness. He united in himself what seldom are united, a vigorous and excursive imagination, with a strong and steady judgment. His memory was remarkably tenacious, and his apprehension wonderfully quick and accurate. He was rather a man of learning than of science. He had accumulated a vast fund of knowledge, without much of system or methodical arrangement. His reading seems to have been casual, generally desultory. To conversa-

tion he owed much of his varied knowledge; and to his vigorous comprehensive powers, he was indebted for that clearness of distinction, that pointed judicious discrimination, which elucidated every question, and astonished every hearer. From this casual reading, he rose with a mind seldom fatigued, endowed with a clear, accurate perception; the variety of his studies relieved, without fatiguing or perplexing him; the ideas arranged in order, were ready for use, adorned with all the energy of language, and the force of manner. But the labour of literature was a task from which he always wished to escape; and as he could excel others without great exertion, we seldom perceive his faculties brought forward in their full power. We scarcely see any attempt, beyond a periodical paper, which he did not professedly continue with lassitude and fatigue.

He deserves the character of master of the Latin language ; but it is easy to perceive that his acquaintance with Greek literature was, what it is commonly supposed to be, general and superficial, rather than curious or profound. Of natural science he knew but little ; and most of his notions on that branch of philosophy were obsolete and erroneous. In his writings he appears to have taken more from his own mind than from books, and he displays his learning rather in allusions to the opinions of others, than in the direct use of them. History he professed to disregard ; yet his memory was so tenacious, [that we seldom find him at a loss upon any topic, ancient or modern.

From early prejudices, which all his philosophy and learning could never overcome, he was a zealous and scrupulous high-church-man, following to the uttermost tenet, the notions of *Laud*, whose talents

talents he has praised, and whose genius he has deplored in his *Vanity of Human Wishes*. In his political sentiments, he was a rank Tory, and till his present Majesty's accession to the throne, a violent Jacobite. He had never examined either his religious or political creed. Bigotted as to a particular system of politics, he appears obstinately to have closed his eyes against the light of truth; and so far from seeking information on the subject, studiously resisted it. His piety was truly venerable and edifying. In divinity, however, his researches were limited. He was well acquainted with the general evidences of Christianity; but he does not appear to have read his Bible with a critical eye, nor to have interested himself concerning the elucidation of obscure or difficult passages. It was his favourite maxim, "that the proper study of mankind is man;" and we must confess that in all the departments of

moral science, his excellence is unrivalled. His acute penetration was constantly alive to "catch the manners living as they rise," and but few follies or peculiarities could escape his observation.

The habitual weaknesses of his mind form a striking and melancholy contrast to the vigour of his understanding. His opinions were tainted with prejudices almost too coarse and childish for the vulgar to imbibe. His attachment to the university of Oxford, to which in his youth he owed no great obligations, led him unjustly to depreciate the merit of every person who had studied at that of Cambridge. His aversion to Whigs, Dissenters, and Presbyterians, and his dislike to Scotland, and many more extravagancies of opinion, that it would be painful to enumerate, inflamed his conversation, and influenced his conduct. He was so prone to superstition as

to make it a rule that a particular foot should constantly make the first actual movement, when he came close to the threshold of any door or passage, which he was about to enter, or to quit. So deeply was he infected upon this subject, that Mr. Boswell relates that he has often seen him “ when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion.” He took off his hat in token of reverence, when he approached the places on which Popish churches had formerly stood ; and bowed before the monastic vestiges. He was solicitous to give authenticity to stories of apparitions, and eager to credit the existence of a second-sight, while he appeared scrupulous and sceptical as to particular facts. These mental distempers were

the offspring of his melancholic temperament, and were fostered by solitary contemplation, till they had laid fetters upon the imagination too strong for reason to burst through. We see it exerted in different circumstances, and expanding its gloomy influence, till at last it terminated little short of insanity. To this state we must attribute his mentioning secret transgressions, his constant fear of death, and his religious terrors, not very consistent with his strength of mind, or his conviction of the goodness of God. This, at least, seems to have been his own opinion of the progress of these diseases, as appears from his history of the *Mad Astronomer* in *Rasselas*, the description of whose mind he seems to have intended as a representation of his own.

But let us turn from these foibles and singularities, which show him weaker than the generality of his fellow men, and point

to those perfections of mind, which prove him to have been of a rank so much above them.

As an author, Johnson has distinguished himself as a *philologist*, a *biographer*, a *critic*, a *moralist*, a *novelist*, a *political writer*, and a *poet*.

On his *Dictionary of the English Language*, it is unnecessary to enlarge. It is in every body's hands ; its utility is universally acknowledged ; and its popularity is its best eulogium. The etymologies, though they exhibit learning and judgment, are not entitled to unqualified praise. The definitions exhibit astonishing proofs of acuteness of intellect, and precision of language. A few of them must be admitted to be erroneous. Thus, *Windward* and *Leeward*, though directly of opposite meaning, are defined identically the same way. The definition of *Net-work* has been often quoted with sportive malignity, as obscuring

a thing in itself very plain. His introducing his own opinions, and even prejudices, under general definitions of words, as *Tory*, *Whig*, *Pension*, *Oats*, *Excise*, and a few more, must be placed to the account of capricious and humourous indulgence. To his list of technical and provincial words, nine thousand have been added by Mr. Herbert Croft, in his “ Dictionary of the English Language;” the publication of which is delayed for want of suitable encouragement.

As a *biographer*, his merit is of the highest kind. His narration in general is vigorous, connected, and perspicuous; and his reflections numerous, apposite, and moral. But it must be owned that he neither dwells with pleasure or success upon those minuter anecdotes of life which oftener show the genuine man, than actions of greater importance. Sometimes, also, his colourings receive a tinge from preju-

dice, and his judgment is insensibly warped by the particularity of his private opinion. These observations apply to his *Life of Savage*, the most finished of his biographical disquisitions; and his *Lives* of several other eminent men, which were originally printed in the "Gentleman's Magazine," and in other periodical publications, and afterwards collected by Mr. Davies, in his "Miscellaneous and Fugitive Pieces," and to his *Lives of the Poets*.

As a *critic*, he is entitled to the praise of being the greatest that our nation has produced. He has not, like his predecessors, tried merely to learn the art, and not to feel it. He has not gone to Dacier or to Bossu, to borrow rules to fetter genius by example, and impart distinctions which lead to no end; but, possessed of two qualities, without which a critic is no more than a caviller, strong sense, and an intimate knowledge of human nature, he has

followed his own judgment, unbiaſſed by authority, and has adopted all the good ſenſe of Ariſtotle, untrammelled by his forms. This praiſe he has merited by his *Preface to Shakspeare*, and the detached pieces of criticiſm which appear among his works. But his critical powers ſhine with more concentrated radiance in the *Lives of the Poets*. Theſe compositions, abounding in ſtrong and juſt illustrations of criticiſm, evince the vigour of his mind, and that happy art of moralization, by which he gives to well-known incidents the grace of novelty and the force of inſtruction; and “grapples the attention,” by expreſſing common thoughts with uncommon ſtrength and elegance. Of many paſſages, it is ſcarcely hyperbolical to affirm, that they are executed with all the ſkill and penetration of Ariſtotle, and animated and embellished with all the fire of Longinus. The *Lives of Cowley, Milton,*

Butler, Waller, Dryden, Addison, and Pope, are elaborately composed, and exhibit the noblest specimens of entertaining and solid criticism, that ancient or modern times have produced. The dissertation in the *Life of Cowley*, on the metaphysical poets of the last century, has all the attraction of novelty, as well as sound observation. In the review of his works, false wit is detected in all its shapes; and the Gothic taste for glittering conceits, and far-fetched allusions, is exploded, never, it is hoped, to revive again. The “*Paradise Lost*,” is a poem which the mind of *Milton* only could have produced; the criticism upon it is such as, perhaps, the pen of *Johnson* only could have written. His estimate of *Dryden* and *Pope*, challenges *Quintilian*’s remarks upon *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*, and rivals the finest specimens of elegant composition and critical acuteness in the English language. Some caution, however, is

required to peruse these admirable compositions with advantage. The present writer means not to say that they are perfect, or that, on the whole, they are executed with propriety. If they be regarded merely as containing narrations of the lives, delineations of the characters, and strictures of the several authors, they are far from being always to be depended upon. Johnson, as he has had occasion to remark, in reviewing his judgments of the several poets who have fallen under his consideration, brought to the production of this work ideas already formed, opinions tinged with his usual hues of party and prejudice, and the rigid unfeeling philosophy, which could neither bend to excuse failings, or judge of what was not capable of a dispassionate disquisition.

To think for himself in critical, as in all other matters, is a privilege to which every one is undoubtedly entitled. This privi-

lege of critical independence, an affectation of singularity, or some other principle not immediately visible, is frequently betraying into a dogmatical spirit of contradiction to received opinion. Of this there need no further proofs, than his almost uniform attempt to depreciate the writers of blank verse, and his degrading estimate of the exquisite compositions of Prior, Hammond, Collins, Gray, Shenstone, and Akenfide, and his pronouncing the "Paradise Lost" "one of those books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take it up again." In his judgments of these poets, he may be justly accused of being inflamed by prejudice, resolutely blind to merit. His rigorous condemnation, and puerile criticisms upon Gray, and his fastidious judgment of Shenstone, have drawn down upon him the united censures of those who admire poetry in her most daring attitudes and gorgeous at-

tire, and those who are pleased with her modest beauties, most humble steps, and least adorned guise. He observes of Shensstone, that he set little value upon those parts of knowledge which he had not cultivated himself. His own taste of poetry seems in some degree regulated by a similar standard ; method, ratiocination, and argument, especially if the vehicle be rhyme, often obtaining his regard and commendation, while the bold and enthusiastic, though perhaps irregular flights of imagination, are passed by with obstinate and perverse indifference. It is not, then, to be wondered at, that the panegyrist of Blackmore should withhold from Collins and Gray the commendation he has bestowed on Savage and Yalden ; and that his praises of the whole class of descriptive poets are parsimoniously bestowed, and too frigid to make an impression. This is to be attributed to the natural turn of his

mind, and to the bent which his feelings had received from the habits of his life. A certain inelegance of taste, a frigid churlishness of temper, unsubdued and unqualified by that melting sensibility, that divine enthusiasm of soul, which are essential to a hearty relish of poetical composition, too often counteracted and corrupted the other poetical virtues of his intellect. Poetry pleases only as it is the image of reality. He who has never delighted in the silent beauties of creation, can feel no emotions, as they are reflected to him in description. Accustomed to dogmatize in his closet, and swelter in some alley in the city, Johnson's mind never throbbed with poetic thrills, as nature expanded her rural glories to his eye; and he preferred the dust of Fleet-Street, or the windings of the Strand, to the air of Hampstead, or the beauties of Greenwich.

One general remark may be ventured upon here: Through the whole of his work, the desire of praise, except in the case of some very favourite author, is almost always overpowered by his disposition to censure; and while beauties are passed over “with the neutrality of a stranger, and the coldness of a critic,” the slightest blemish is examined with microscopical sagacity. The truth of this observation is particularly obvious, when he descends to his contemporaries, for whom he appears to have little more brotherly kindness, than they might have expected at Constantinople. The present writer is under no apprehension of being charged with an unjustifiable partiality in this opinion of him, by those who know his disposition and the habits of his life. All that is great and genuinely good in Johnson, have had no warmer encomiast. He has uniformly praised his genius, his learn-

ing, his good sense, the strength of his reasonings, the sagacity of his critical decisions, the happiness of his illustrations, and the animation and energy of his style: He has acknowledged that there is no satiety in the delight he inspires on moral and religious themes; and he makes no scruple to declare, that, though there are many opinions erroneous, and many observations improper, a great part of his *Lives of the Poets* is such as no one but himself could have executed, and in which he will not be followed with success.

As a *moralist*, his periodical papers are distinguished from those of other writers, who have derived celebrity from similar publications. He has neither the wit nor the graceful ease of Addison; nor does he shine with the humour and classic suavity of Goldsmith. His powers are of a more grave, energetic, and dignified kind, than any of his competitors; and if he enter-

tains us less, he instructs us more. He shows himself master of all the recesses of the human mind, able to detect vice, when disguised in her most specious form, and equally possessed of a corrosive to eradicate, or a lenitive to assuage the follies and sorrows of the heart. Virtuous in his object, just in his conceptions, strong in his arguments, and powerful in his exhortations, he arrests the attention of levity by the luxuriance of his imagery, and grandiloquence of his diction; while he awes detected guilt into submission by the majesty of his declamation, and the sterling weight of his opinions. But his genius is only formed to chastise graver faults, which require to be touched with an heavier hand. He could not chase away such lighter foibles as buzz in our ears in society, and fret the feelings of our less important hours. His gigantic powers were able to prepare the immortal path to hea-

ven, but could not stoop to decorate our manners with these lesser graces, which make life amiable. Johnson, at such a task, was Hercules at the distaff, a lion courting of a mouse, or an eagle stooping at a fly. He was formed to sustain the character of a majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom. His *Rambler* furnishes such an assemblage of discourses on practical religion and moral duty, of critical investigations, and allegorical and oriental tales, that no mind can be thought very deficient, that has by constant study and meditation assimilated to itself all that may be found there. Though instruction be its predominant purpose, yet it is enlivened with a considerable portion of amusement. Nos. 19, 44, 82, 88, 179, 182, 194, 195, 197, and 198, may be appealed to for instances of fertility of fancy, and accurate description of real life. Every page of the *Rambler* shows a mind teem-

ing with classical allusion and poetical imagery: illustrations from other writers, are upon all occasions so ready, and mingle so easily in his periods, that the whole appears of one uniform vivid texture. The serious papers in his *Idler*, though inferior to those in the *Rambler*, in sublimity and splendor, are distinguished by the same dignified morality and solemn philosophy, and lead to the same great end of diffusing wisdom, virtue, and happiness. The humorous papers are light and lively, and more in the manner of Addison.

As a *novelist*, the amazing powers of his imagination, and his unbounded knowledge of men and manners, may be plainly traced in the *oriental tales* in the *Rambler*, in which he has not only supported to the utmost, the sublimity of the eastern manner of expression, but even greatly excelled any of the oriental writers, in the fertility of his invention, the conduct of

his plots, and the justness and strength of his sentiments. His capital work of that kind is his *Rasselas*. None of his writings have been so extensively diffused over Europe. Such a reception demonstrates great beauties in the work ; and there is no doubt that great beauties do exist there. The language enchants us with harmony ; the arguments are acute and ingenious ; the reflections novel, yet just. It astonishes with the sublimity of its sentiments, and at the fertility of its illustrations, and delights with the abundance and propriety of its imagery. The fund of thinking which it contains, is such, that almost every sentence of it may furnish a subject of long meditation. But it is not without its faults. It is barren of interesting incidents, and destitute of originality, or distinction of characters. There is little difference in the manner of thinking and reasoning of the philosopher and the fe-

male, of the prince and the waiting woman. *Nebagab* and *Imlac*, *Rasselas* and *Pebuah*, are all equally argumentative, abstracted, eloquent, and obstinate. Of that dark catalogue of calamities, which are described as incident to the several situations of life which he contemplates, some are not the necessary consequence of the situation, but of the temper; and others are not those which are most generally or severely felt there. The moral that he seeks to inculcate, that there is no such thing as happiness, is one ungrateful to the human heart. If he could succeed in establishing it, it would cripple every incitement to virtue, and paralyse every stimulus to action. It would leave man contented to be drifted down the stream of life, without an object or an end; to lose attainable excellence for the want of exertion, and sink under surmountable difficulties, without a struggle. Though there

may not be permanent happiness in the gratification of our wishes, there is much in our expectations that they will be gratified. Hope is the sweet and innocent solace of our frail natures. It is the staff of the unhappy, and however feeble its support, it is immoral and unkind to wrest it from our hands.

The effect of *Rasselas*, and of Johnson's other moral *tales*, is thus beautifully illustrated by Mr. Courtenay, in his "Poetical Review ;"

Impressive truth, in splendid fiction drest,
Checks the vain wish, and calms the troubled breast ;
O'er the dark mind a light celestial throws,
And sooths the angry passions to repose.
As oil effus'd illumines and smooths the deep,
When round the bark the swelling surges sweep.

As a *political writer*, his productions are more distinguished by subtlety of disquisition, poignancy of sarcasm, and dignity and energy of style, than by truth, equity, or candour. He makes much more use

of his rhetoric than of his logic, and often gives his reader high-sounding declamation instead of fair argument. In perusing his representations of those who differed from him on political subjects, we are sometimes inclined to assent to a proposition of his own, that “there is no credit due to a rhetorician’s account, either of good or evil.” Many positions are laid down in admirable language, and in highly-polished periods, which are inconsistent with the principles of the British constitution, and repugnant to the common rights of mankind. It must always be regretted, that a man of Johnson’s intellectual powers, should have had so strong a propensity to defend arbitrary principles of government. But, on this subject, the strength of his language was not more manifest, than the weakness of his arguments. In apology for him, it may be admitted, that he was a Tory from prin-

ciple, and that most of what he wrote, was conformable to his real sentiments. But to defend all that was written by him, his warmest friends will find impossible.

In his posthumous writings, there is little that can be said to be interesting to science or criticism. His *Letters* are valuable, as we find in them the picture, which, without intending it, he has left of himself, to be that of a man, who, to great intellectual powers, added extraordinary piety, and many excellent moral qualities. Of letter writing, he gives his idea in the following passage: "Some, when they write to their friends, are all affection; some are wise and sententious; some restrain their powers for effects of gravity; some write news; and some write secrets; but to make a letter without affection, without wisdom, without gravity, without news, and without secrets, is doubtless the great epistolical style. There is a pleasure

in corresponding with a friend, where doubt and mistrust have no place, and every thing is said as it is thought. These are the letters by which souls are united, and by which minds, naturally in unison, move each other, as they are moved themselves. Let me know where you are, how you got thither, how you live there? and every thing that one friend loves to know of another." Such is the account of his *Letters*. The value of them is, that we have the man before us for near twenty years. We see him in his undress, that is, the undress of his mind, which, unlike that of his body, was never slovenly. We see him in health and in sickness, and in all the petty business of life. From himself, and in his own words, we are enabled to collect the truest and best information. He writes always in his own style. His words are now and then too pompous for familiar letters; but his skill in letter writ-

ing comes out fully in this collection, and entitles him to rank with the best epistolary writers of our nation. His letters on the death of Mrs. Salusbury (mother of Mrs. Piozzi), and Mr. Thrale's eldest son, are at once moral and pathetic. They flow from a man, who loved them, and the surviving family. His solicitude for Mr. Thrale, during a long illness, and his feelings at his death, do honour to the memory of Mr. Thrale, and to Johnson's gratitude and sensibility. "I am afraid," he says, "of thinking what I have lost: I never had such a friend before." To Mrs. Thrale, he says, "To see and hear you, is always to hear wit and see virtue." He seems at times to think her regard for him is abated; and a letter of kindness from her appears to have revived and comforted him. After lamenting the loss of Williams and Levett, he says: "Such society I had with them, and such I had

——where I am never likely to have it more.” When I came to “love and honour,” in your letter, I said to myself, “How lov’d, how honour’d once, avails me not.” Shall we never again exchange our thoughts by the fireside?” After seeing him struggle with illness and morbid melancholy, it is comfortable to hear him say, almost at the close of life “Attention and respect give pleasure, however late, and however useless. But they are not useless, even when they are late; it is reasonable to rejoice as the day declines, to find that it has been spent with the approbation of mankind.”

His *Prayers and Meditations*, published by Mr. Strahan, “at his own request,” have occasioned much concern, disquietude, and offence in the minds of many, who apprehend that the cause in which he stood forth, will suffer by the infirmities of the advocate being exposed in this publi-

cation, to the prying and malignant eye of the world. It is not merely the name of Johnson that is to do service to any cause. His admirable arguments in favour of religion and morality, are not weakened by the proofs of his practical errors. These are always precisely what they were, once good, and always good. His arguments in favour of self-denial do not lose their force *because he fasted*, nor those in favour of devotion, *because he said his prayers*. His fasting and his prayers add strength to his pious reasonings, from the proof they afford, that he believed in the religion he inculcated. Human nature is frail; common frailties must inevitably preclude perfection to the least faulty professor of Christianity. The world never supposed Johnson to have been a perfect character. His stupendous abilities, and great learning, it is well known, could not preserve their possessor from the depreda-

tions of melancholy. But his failings leaned to the side of virtue. His superstition seems to have arisen from the most amiable disposition in the world, "a pious awe, and fear to have offended," a wish rather to do too much than too little. Such a disposition one loves, and always wishes to find in a friend; and it cannot be disagreeable in the sight of him who made us. It argues a sensibility of heart, a tenderness of conscience, and the fear of God. That he should not be conscious of the abilities with which Providence had blessed him, was impossible. He felt his own powers; he felt what he was capable of having performed, and he saw how little, comparatively speaking, he had performed. Hence his apprehensions on the near prospect of the account to be made, viewed through the medium of constitutional and morbid melancholy, which often excluded from his sight the bright

beams of divine mercy. His self-abasement was strictly ingenuous ; but his expressions, when compared with the tenor of his conduct, seem too disparaging. Christianity does not require us to deny any one quality we possess, or to represent ourselves, in defiance of truth, as one mass of deformity and guilt. The instruction of St. Paul, enforced by the most sacred example, is singly this, that we “ think not of ourselves more highly than we ought to think ; but that we think soberly.” Johnson walked at all times humbly with his God ; but when we follow him through all his weaknesses, his religious horrors, and sacred punctilios, we are inclined to pity the constitutional feebleness of his nature, while we admire the perseverance and fervour of his devotion. We owe to the excellencies of the Supreme Being, every possible degree of veneration and honour ; but that virtue should tremble in

the presence of Infinite Goodness, is not less contrary to reason, than it is contrary to heroism. In the presence of Infinite Goodness it feels a congeniality, and assumes a confidence, that leaps, as it were, the gulf between, and dares to aspire to sentiments of attachment, fidelity and love. But it would be unfair to conclude from this circumstance, that the piety and humility of Johnson were of no value; and the sincerity of his repentance, the steadfastness of his faith, and the fervour of his charity, of no use. There is something so great and awful in the idea of a God, and something so fascinating in the effusions of gratitude, that there are numbers of men intrepid and heroical, in every other regard, that cannot boast of all the serenity and assurance in the business of religion, that are so earnestly to be desired; and yet the piety of these men is edifying and venerable. Indeed the fate of “ the un-

profitable servant" may justly beget apprehensions in the stoutest mind. Language affords no finer expressions than those in which the *Prayers* of Johnson are conceived. They are short, simple, and unadorned. They bear some resemblance to the Collects in the "Common Prayer-Book," without that dignity which is derived to the latter, from the venerable antiquity of the style and expression. They have no particular method, no display of genius, and no beauties that should characterize the man under whose name they appear. They have nothing that might not have been produced by any man of plain common sense. At the same time they contain few traces of weakness or absurdity. Never did there exist a greater disparity between the performances of the same author, than between this publication and the *Lives of the Poets*, or the numbers of the *Rambler*. His *Meditations*, as they are im-

properly called, are merely minutes ; at one time of resolutions for his future conduct, and at another, in the style of a diary or journal. Neither of them deserve the commendation which has been bestowed upon the *Prayers*. They are full of frivolous minutenesses, and feminine weakness, beyond any thing of which an abstract description can suggest the idea. They tell us, that Johnson, in spite of all the contemptuous ridicule with which he has treated that delicate frame, which depends for its composure on the clouds and the winds, was himself not exempt from languor, sluggishness, and procrastination ; that he was full of the most pitiable religious credulity ; and that his attention was often engrossed by things in the last degree frivolous, futile, and unimportant. But if these observations are rather disadvantageous to Johnson, it is no less unquestionable that he displays a sensibility and a

humane benovolence of heart, that have rarely been equalled. Mr. Strahan's apology for Johnson's *seeming* to pray for his deceased wife, is supported by his opinion, respecting purgatory, recorded by Mr. Boswell. In his cooler moments he did not think such prayers proper, except with the limitations there expressed; but his morbid melancholy did not always allow him to be cool; there were many moments when his language countenanced a very different opinion. The struggle in a breast, constituted as his was, between the severe principles of Protestantism, and the genuine undisciplinable feelings of the heart, illustrates the kindness of his nature more than it could be illustrated by any other circumstance.

His *Sermons*, published under the name of *Dr. Taylor*, are not unworthy of the author of the *Rambler*, and afford additional proof of his ardour in the cause of

piety, and every moral duty. The last discourse in the collection was intended to be delivered by Dr. Taylor, at the funeral of Johnson's wife, but he declined the office, because, as he told Mr. Hayes, the praise of the deceased was too much amplified. He who reads the discourse, will find it a beautiful moral lesson, written with temper, and no where overcharged with ambitious ornaments. The rest of the discourses were the fund which Dr. Taylor, from time to time, carried with him to the pulpit.

The *style* of his prose writings has been too often criticised, to need being noticed here. It has been censured, applauded, and imitated, to extremes equally dangerous to the purity of the English tongue. That he has innovated upon our language by his adoption of Latin derivatives and his preference of abstract to concrete terms, cannot be denied. But the danger from

his innovation would be trifling, if those alone would copy him who can think with equal precision ; for few passages can be pointed out from his works, in which his meaning could be as accurately expressed by such words as are in more familiar use. His comprehension of mind was the mould for his language. Had his comprehension been narrower, his expression would have been easier. His sentences have a dignified march, suitable to the elevation of his sentiments, and the pomp of his sonorous phraseology. And it is to be remembered, that while he has added harmony and dignity to our language, he has neither vitiated it by the insertion of foreign idioms, or the affectation of anomaly in the construction of his sentences. While the flowers of poetic imagination luxuriantly adorn his style, it is never enfeebled by their plentitude. It is close without obtenebration, perspicuous without languor, and strong without im-

petuosity. No periods are so harmonious; none so nervous. He has laboured his style with the greatest attention; perhaps its elaborateness is too apparent. It has, perhaps, too unwieldy and too uniform a dignity. He seems to have been particularly studious of the glitter of an antithesis between the epithet and the substantive. This strikes while it is new; but to the more experienced reader, though it may seem sometimes forcible, yet it will often prove tiresome. It is remarkable that Johnson's early performances bear few marks of the style which he adopted in his *Rambler*. In his *Life of Savage*, the style is elegant, but not ostentatious. His sentences are naturally arranged, and musical without artifice. He affects not the measuring of clauses, and the balancing of periods. He aims not at splendid, glowing diction. He seeks not pointed phrases, and elaborate contrasts. It is al-

so worthy of remark, on this subject, that Johnson has altered, and perhaps improved his style, long after his reputation had been established, and his *Rambler* had appeared. The composition of this work differs a good deal from that of *Rasselas*, the *Journey to the Western Islands*, and *The Lives of the Poets*. The native vigour, and peculiarity of feature, are indeed preserved, but they are polished to greater elegance, and taught to wear the appearance of a happier ease. In the *Rambler* his periods are longer, and his meaning more condensed; he is more fond of abstract terms, and ambitious of sesquipedalian words. But this work was written while he was occupied in collecting authorities for his *Dictionary*; at a time when Browne and Hooker, Bacon and Hakewell, were continually before him; men whom it was difficult to read, and remain free from the temptation to imitate. In his latter productions, particularly his *Lives of the Poets*,

his sentences are shorter, their construction more simple, and the use of Latin derivations less frequent. He has made his style in a greater degree elegant without constraint, dignified without ambitious ornament, strong without rigidity, and harmonious without elaboration. He has adopted a measured pause, and a correspondent length in the numbers of his periods, which gives to his prose much of the harmony, and sometimes somewhat of the monotony of verse. As Homer gave a peculiar language to his gods, to express their divine conceptions, let us allow to Johnson, and to men like him, a style such as he has used; for we have as yet found none more grand and energetic. It is certain that his example has given a general elevation to the language of his country; for many of our best writers have approached very near to him; and from the influence which he has had upon our com-

position, scarcely any thing is written now, that is not better expressed than was usual before he appeared to lead the national taste. This circumstance is well described by Mr. Courtenay, in his “ Poetical Review ;” a performance which shows that he has caught no mean degree of the expansion and harmony which characterize the style of Johnson.

By nature's gifts ordain'd mankind to rule,
He like a Titian form'd his brilliant school,
And taught congenial spirits to excel,
While from his lips impressive wisdom fell.

Among the congenial spirits “ who formed the school of Johnson,” Mr. Courtenay celebrates the respectable names of Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Burney, Mr. Malone, Mr. Steevens, Dr. Hawkesworth, Sir William Jones, and Mr. Boswell, and concludes his description in the following animated lines :

Nor was his energy confin'd alone
 To friends around his philosophic throne;
His influence wide improv'd our letter'd isle,
And lucid vigour mark'd the general style;
 As Nile's proud waves, swoln from their oozy bed,
 First o'er the neighb'ring mead majestic spread,
 Till, gathering force, they more and more expand,
 And with due virtue fertilize the land.

Among the imitators of Johnson's style, whether intentionally, or by the imperceptible effect of its strength and animation, may be reckoned a great proportion of the most distinguished writers in our language since he appeared, Dr. Robertson, Dr. Blair, Mr. Gibbon, Dr. Leland, Dr. Ferguson, Dr. Knox, Dr. Stuart, Dr. Parr, Dr. Thomson, Dr. Gillies, Mr. Mackenzie, and Mr. Chalmers, &c. Perhaps the most perfect imitation of Johnson is a professed one, intituled "A Criticism on Gray's Elegy in a Country Church-Yard," said to be written by Dr. Young, Professor of Greek at Glasgow. It has not only the

peculiarities of Johnson's style, but that very species of literary discussion and illustration for which he was eminent.—But let men of moderate conceptions beware of ill judged imitations. Their attempt to copy his language is Salmoneus thundering at Elis, or a mortal wielding the spear of Pelides. It is to raise a melancholy contrast between the slimness of the thought, and the capacity of the expression, to cover the head of a pigmy with the casque of a giant.

As a *poet*, the merit of Johnson, though considerable, yet falls far short of that which he has displayed in those provinces of literature in which we have already surveyed him. As far as strength of expression, fruitfulness of invention, and abundance of imagery, constitute poetry, he is much more of a poet in his prose works, than in his metrical compositions. Metaphor, to the merit of which he was blind and uncharitable, is so much the soul and

essence of poetry, that without it rhyme and metre are vain. There may be smoothness, syllabic arrangement, and good sense, in a metrical production ; but there can be no true poetry without imagery, warm expression, and an enthusiasm which intoxicates the reader, lifts him above the ground, and makes him forget that he is mortal. Poetry is passion ; passion is a temporary phrenzy, during which we both hear and see what we are totally insensible to in our sober senses. What did the ancients mean by the Pythian priestess being *numine afflata*, when she received inspiration, and delivered it in verse, and in applying the same idea to poets, but that they had such a temporary delirium ? Ratiocination prevailed in Johnson much more than sensibility. He has no daring sublimities, nor gentle graces ; he never glows with the enthusiasm of the god, or kindles a sympathetic emotion in the bosom of his

readers. His poems are the plain and sensible effusions of a mind never hurried beyond itself, to which the use of rhyme adds no beauty, and from which the use of prose would detract no force. His versification is smooth, flowing, and unrestrained; but his pauses are not sufficiently varied, to rescue him from the imputation of monotony. He seems never at a loss for rhyme, or destitute of a proper expression; and the manner of his verse appears admirably adapted to didactic or satiric poetry, for which his powers were equally, and perhaps alone qualified.

His tragedy of *Irene* may be considered as the greatest effort of his genius. It is a legitimate dramatic composition. The unities of time, place, and action, are strictly observed. The diction is nervous, rich, and elegant; but splendid language, and melodious numbers, will make a fine poem, not a tragedy. The substance of the story

is shortly this. In 1453, Mahomet the Great, first emperor of the Turks, laid siege to Constantinople, and having reduced the place, became enamoured of a fair Greek, whose name was *Irene*. The sultan invited her to embrace the law of Mahomet, and to grace his throne. Enraged at this intended marriage, the janizaries formed a conspiracy to dethrone the emperor. To avert the impending danger, Mahomet, in a full assembly of the grandees, “ catching with one hand,” as Knolles expresses it, “ the fair Greek by the hair of her head, and drawing his faulchion with the other, he, at one blow, struck off her head, to the great terror of them all; and having so done, said unto them, “ Now, by this, judge whether your emperor is able to bridle his affections or not.” The story is simple, and it remained for Johnson to amplify it with proper episodes, and give it complication and variety. But he has altered the cha-

racter and catastrophe, which he found in the historian, so as to diminish the dramatic effect. Many faults may be found with the conduct of the fable. The principal one is, that the plot is double, and has the most striking faults of such a fable ; for it divides the spectator's attention and regard between characters, whose interests are opposite, and whose happiness or misery is made to depend upon the same events. We cannot hope the escape of *Demetrius* and *Aspasia*, without dreading the condemnation of *Irene* ; and our wishes as to each, operating in contradiction, must diminish our concern for both. The catastrophe, which is made to depend upon the fate of *Irene*, is meanly worked up. It is brought about too suddenly, without a due connection with preparatory incidents, and at the very moment when we have not leisure to contemplate it, and are alone interested for the escape of *Demetrius* and *As-*

passia. We neither anticipate it with sufficient perspicuity, nor consider it with solemnity, so as to be affected, upon its occurrence, with genuine dramatic grief or terror. The characters of the piece have nothing discriminative. They are not representations of different tempers, passions, and minds, but of different degrees of virtue and vice. They are so naked of peculiarity, that we cannot know why the same incidents should operate differently upon any one of them, so as to impel them to a different action, or produce an emotion even varying in strength from what it would have done in any other. They possess too much of a balanced importance in the conduct of the drama, so that the mind knows not how to make its election of a principal character, or to fix its attention upon any personage to whose felicity it may attach its wishes, and upon whose fate it may suspend its sympathy. From the

name of the tragedy, we must suppose that Johnson considered *Irene* as the *heroine*, yet the reader feels more concern, even for the stoic virtue and cool fondness of *Aspasia*. The former is too much of a mixed character; neither her goodness, nor her weakness, nor her depravity are predominant. She has not sufficient virtue to awaken our sympathy for the sufferings of innocence, nor sufficient vice to arouse our terror at the punishment of guilt. The speeches are oftener the recollections of past feelings, than the ebullitions of immediate passions, started by the passing actions of the scene. Little is made present to the spectator's mind, and of that little, nothing has life. His critique upon the tragic poets, of the commencement of this century, is, perhaps, in no instance, more true than it is of himself.

From bard to bard the frigid caution crept,
And declamation roar'd whilst passion slept;

Yet still did virtue deign the stage to tread,
Philosophy remain'd, though nature fled.

He has nothing of the fire of Lee, or the pathos of Otway. He is more declamatory than Rowe, and *Irene*, if possible, is colder than "Cato." There is not, throughout the play, a single situation to excite curiosity, and raise a conflict of passions. The sentiments are just and always moral, but seldom appropriated to the character, and generally too philosophic. His poetical imagery is neither striking nor abundant. The language in which the thoughts are conveyed, is, in general, vigorous, accurately polished, and regularly musical. It would be difficult to select a passage in dramatic poetry more nobly conceived, or finely expressed, than the reply of *Demetrius* to the complaint of his friend, that no prodigy from Heaven had foretold the calamities of Greece.

A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it ;
 A feeble government, eluded laws,
 A factious populace, luxurious nobles,
 And all the maladies of sinking states.
 When public villany, too strong for justice,
 Shows his bold front, the harbinger of ruin,
 Can brave Leontius call for any wonders,
 Which cheats interpret, and which fools regard ?
 When some neglected fabric nods beneath
 The weight of years, and totters to the tempest,
 Must Heaven dispatch the messengers of light,
 Or wake the dead to warn us of its fall ?

As an alloy to the beauties of this passage, impartial criticism is compelled to turn to another, which is surely little short of nonsense, and well worthy of a place in the treatise of "Scriblerus."

Oft have I rag'd, when their wide-wasting cannon
 Lay pointed at our batteries, yet *unform'd*,
 And *broke the meditated lines* of war.

Irene may be added to some other plays in our language, which have lost their place in the theatre, but continue to please in the closet. As it is the drama of our

great English moralist, the present writer should wish to see it revived.

Of the poetical compositions, which are known to be of his writing, the *Imitations of Juvenal* are the best; and are, perhaps, the noblest imitations to be found in any language. They are not so close as those done by Pope from Horace, but they are infinitely more spirited and energetic. In Pope, the most peculiar images of Roman life are adapted with singular address to our own times; in Johnson, the similitude is only in general passages, suitable to every age in which refinement has degenerated into depravity.

His *London* breathes the true vehement contemptuous indignation of Juvenal's satire. It is more popular in its subject, and more animated in its composition, than his *Vanity of Human Wishes*. It blazes forth with the genuine fire of poetry, in the liveliness of its correspondent allusions, the

energy of its expressions, and the frequency of its apostrophes. The *Vanity of Human Wishes* is more grave, moral, sententious, and stately. In his *London* he often takes nothing more than the subject from the Roman poet, proves or illustrates it according to the originality of his own conceptions, or the warmth of his own fancy; and sometimes, too, he deserts him altogether, and that not only where the modesty of an English ear, and the inapplicability of the original to modern customs require it, but in places where the topics and the moral use is as applicable to London as they are to ancient Rome. Thus he has either totally neglected, or but slightly imitated that beautiful passage beginning at ver. 137

Dat testem Romæ tam sanctum, quam fuit hospes
Numinis Idæi, &c.

and ending with ver. 190.

—præstare tributa clientes
 Cogimur, et cultis augere peculia servis.

The *Vanity of Human Wishes* follows the original more closely, but still with many omissions. The subject is taken from the second “Alcibiades” of Plato, and has an intermixture of the sentiments of Socrates, concerning the object of prayers offered up to the Deity. The general proposition is, that good and evil are so little understood by mankind, that their wishes, when granted, are always destructive. This is exemplified in a variety of instances; such as riches, state-preferment, eloquence, military glory, long life, and the advantages of beauty. Juvenal’s conclusion is admirable. “Let us,” he says, “leave it to the gods to judge what is fittest for us. Man is dearer to his Creator than to himself. If we must pray for any special grace, let it be for a sound mind, in a sound body. Let us pray for fortitude,

that we may think the labours of Hercules, and all his sufferings, preferable to a life of luxury, dissipation, and the soft repose of Sardanapulus. This is a blessing within the reach of every man; this we can give ourselves. It is virtue, and virtue only, that can make us happy." For the characters which Juvenal has chosen to illustrate his doctrine, Johnson has substituted others from modern history; for Sejanus, he gives Cardinal *Wolsey*, *Buckingham*, stabbed by *Felton*, *Strafford* and *Clarendon*; for Demosthenes and Cicero, *Lydiat*, *Galileo*, and *Laud*; for Hannibal, *Charles XII*; and to show the consequences of long life, he says,

From *Marlbrough's* eyes the streams of dotage flow,
And *Swift* expires a driveller and a show:

And of beauty he says,

Yet *Vane* would tell what ills from beauty spring,
And *Sedley* curs'd the form that pleas'd a king.

This last example is ill chosen ; for it is well known that the Countess of Dorchester, mistress to James II. was not handsome. Owing to the dearth of modern examples, his instances are less numerous and less striking than those of Juvenal. His thoughts are not so compressed in the expression, or so energetically conveyed to the mind, as those of the Roman satirist ; but his diction is less laboured and affected, and he flows in a stream of versification scarcely less rapid and eloquent, but infinitely more smooth than the Latin poet. He has preserved all the beauties and virtue of the original moral, but stripped it, with infinite art, from all appearance of Epicurean infidelity, and filled it with precepts worthy of a philosopher, and wishes fitting for a Christian. He has succeeded wonderfully in giving to his imitation the air of an original. The Christian had to struggle with the Heathen

poet, and though we cannot say that he has surpassed him, he has, at least, entered into a noble competition.

Of his smaller poems, the *Prologue for the Opening of Drury-Lane Theatre*, has been universally admired, as a masterly and comprehensive criticism upon the several ages of English dramatic poetry. The subject and the moral were well conceived, and are as nobly expressed. The character of *Shakspeare* is delineated with a felicity of expression, that challenges the whole compass of English poetry. His other *Prologues* are copies of his mind, clear and comprehensive, pointed and energetic. Of his *Odes* upon the seasons, his addresses to *Autumn* and *Winter* seem the best. Many of the stanzas are exceedingly beautiful; as usual, moral, and unusually pathetic. They manifest, however, that his descriptive poetry is not the production of a warm fancy, impelled to

give vent by poesy to its overflowing feelings. Those passions and objects which would inspire the genuine poetic mind with enthusiasm, pass by him unfelt and unnoticed. He is melancholy in Spring, jocund in Winter; he lavishes no encomiums upon the perfumed zephyrs, but flies to melancholy morals, or commemorates the comforts of a cheering flaggon and a snug fire-side. His *Ode to Evening*, addressed to *Stella*, the *Natural Beauty*, and the *Vanity of Wealth*, are in general elegant. The first is warm and sentimental, and shows that he was neither ignorant of the feelings, nor insensible to the joys of a lover. The *Ode to Friendship* is distinguished by delicacy of sentiment and beauty of expression. Of his address *To Lyce*, the idea perhaps is not original; but the images are happily selected, and well expressed. *Stella in Mourning*, the verses to *Lady Firebrace*, *To an elderly Lady*, and *On the Sprig*

of Myrtle, are occasional compositions, and of course derive their merit chiefly from local and temporary circumstances. The principal art in such performances, is to make a trifling circumstance poetical or witty. In the verses *On the Sprig of Myrtle*, he has very happily succeeded. The *Ant* must be allowed to be nervous and elegant. The verses *On the Death of Stephen Grey*, are worthy the pen of Pope.

The *Elegy on the Death of Mr. Levett*, as it was among the last, so it is one of the best of his performances. It is moral, characteristic, and pathetic. The following stanzas are exquisitely beautiful.

Yet still he fills affection's eye,
 Obscurely wise and coarsely kind;
 Nor letter'd arrogance deny
 This praise to merit unrefin'd.
 When fainting nature call'd for aid,
 And hovering death prepar'd the blow,
 His vigorous remedy display'd
 The power of art without the show:

In misery's darkest cavern known,
 His useful care was ever nigh,
 Where hopeless anguish pour'd his groan,
 And lonely want retir'd to die.
 No summons mock'd by chill delay,
 No petty gain disdain'd by pride;
 The modest wants of every day
 The toil of every day supply'd.

The concluding lines are exceptionable:

Death broke at once the *vital chain*,
 And forc'd his soul the *nearest way*,

Since it is the soul which gives *life*, the chain that confines the soul is corporeal: The *vital* chain cannot be said, with propriety, to be broken by death. Johnson would not have forgiven an error of this kind in Gray.

Of his remaining pieces, some are mere impromptus, which were never intended for the public eye, and others were the suggestions of temporary incidents. Many of them are sprightly and elegant, and may be read with pleasure; but they require

no distinct enumeration, or particular criticism.

Among our English poets, it is no unpleasant reflection to be able to find so many elegant writers of Latin verse; in the first rank of which, Johnson stands very high. Jonson, Crashaw, Cowley, May, Milton, Marvel, Addison, Gray, Smart, Warton, and Johnson, are such writers of Latin verse, as any country might with justice be proud to own. Johnson was eminently skilled in the Latin tongue, and strongly attached to the cultivation of Latin poetry. The first fruits of his genius were compositions in Latin verse. His translation of the *Messiah*, gained him reputation in the college in which it was written, and was approved by Pope. Virgil seems to have been his model for language and versification. He has copied the varied pauses of his verse, the length of his periods, the peculiar grace of his

expressions, and his majestic dignity, with considerable success. But his composition is sometimes unclassical and incorrect. The most exceptionable line is the first; *tollere concentum*, if allowable, is surely an awkward phrase for “begin the song.” His *Odes*, particularly, the *Ode Incbkenneth*, *Ode in the Isle of Sky*, and that to *Mrs. Thrale*, from the same place, are easy, elegant, and poetical. They unite classical language, tender sentiment, and harmonious verse. His poem, Γνώθι σεαυτον, is nervous and energetic. His *Epitaphs* are distinguished by classical elegance and nervous simplicity. Those on *Goldsmith* and *Thrale* seem the best. His *Epigrams* are, in general, neat and pointed. In the *Anthologia*, we admire sometimes a happy imitation, and sometimes regret inelegant expressions.

For obvious reasons, his Latin pieces, though excellent in their kind, can never

acquire the popularity of the English. Those who read with pleasure the Latin classics, see their inferiority; to others, they are uninteresting and unintelligible. “The delight which they afford;” to use his own words, in criticising the Latin poetry of Milton, “is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention, or vigour of sentiment.” This character will generally suit our modern Latin poetry; for if we except that noble ode of Gray’s, written at the Grande Chartreuse, and some few others, there are not many of the *Poemata Anglorum*, that contain much “power of invention, or vigour of sentiment.”

Upon the whole, the various productions of Johnson show a life spent in study and meditation. It may be fairly allowed, as he used to say of himself, that *he has writ-*

ten his share. His oddities and infirmities in common life, will, after a while, be overlooked and forgotten ; but his writings will remain a monument of his genius and learning ; still more and more studied and admired, while Britons shall continue to be characterized by a love of elegance and sublimity, of good sense and virtue. In the works of Johnson, the reader will find a perpetual source of pleasure and instruction. With due precaution, men may learn to give to their style, elegance, harmony, and precision ; they may be taught to think with vigour and perspicuity ; and all, by a diligent attention to his writings, may advance in virtue.

The character of Johnson, as given by Mr. Boswell in the conclusion of his work, is delineated with a masterly pencil. The drawing appears to be sufficiently accurate, the light and shade well distributed, and the colouring very little overcharged or

heightened ; though a favourable likeness was perhaps in some degree intended, as far as might seem consistent with the truth of resemblance, and no farther.

“ His figure was large and well-formed, and his countenance of the cast of an ancient statue ; yet his appearance was rendered strange and somewhat uncouth, by convulsive cramps, by the scars of that distemper which it was once imagined the royal touch could cure, and by a slovenly mode of dress. He had the use only of one eye ; yet so much does mind govern, and even supply the deficiency of organs, that his visual perceptions, as far as they extended, were uncommonly quick and accurate. So morbid was his temperament, that he never knew the natural joy of a free and vigorous use of his limbs : when he walked, it was like the struggling gait of one in fetters ; when he rode, he had

no command or direction of his horse, but was carried as if in a balloon. That, with his constitution and habits of life, he should have lived seventy-five years, is a proof that an inherent *vivida vis* is a powerful preservative of the human frame.

“ Man is in general made up of contradictory qualities, and these will ever show themselves in strange succession, where a consistency, in appearance at least, if not in reality, has not been attained by long habits of philosophical discipline. In proportion to the native vigour of the mind, the contradictory qualities will be the more prominent, and more difficult to be adjusted; and therefore we are not to wonder, that Johnson exhibited an eminent example of this remark which I have made upon human nature. At different times he seemed a different man, in some respects; not, however, in any great or essential article, upon which he had fully em-

ployed his mind, and settled certain principles of duty, but only in his manners, and in displays of argument and fancy in his talk. He was prone to superstition, but not to credulity. Though his imagination might incline him to a belief of the marvellous and the mysterious, his vigorous reason examined the evidence with jealousy. He was a sincere and zealous Christian, of high church of England and monarchical principles, which he would not tamely suffer to be questioned; and had, perhaps, at an early period, narrowed his mind somewhat too much, both as to religion and politics. His being impressed with the danger of extreme latitude in either, though he was of a very independent spirit, occasioned his appearing somewhat unfavourable to the prevalence of that noble freedom of sentiment which is the best possession of man. Nor can it be denied, that he had many prejudices; which, however,

frequently suggested many of his pointed sayings, that rather show a playfulness of fancy, than any settled malignity. He was steady and inflexible in maintaining the obligations of religion and morality, both from a regard for the order of society, and from a veneration for the Great Source of all order; correct, nay stern in his taste; hard to please, and easily offended; impetuous and irritable in his temper, but of a most humane and benevolent heart, which showed itself not only in a most liberal charity, as far as his circumstances would allow, but in a thousand instances of active benevolence. He was afflicted with a bodily disease which made him restless and fretful, and with a constitutional melancholy, the clouds of which darkened the brightness of his fancy, and gave a gloomy cast to his whole course of thinking: we therefore ought not to wonder at his fallies of impatience and passion at any time, espe-

cially when provoked by obtrusive ignorance, or presuming petulance ; and allowance must be made for his uttering hasty and satirical sallies, even against his best friends. And surely, when it is considered, that “ amidst sickness and sorrow,” he exerted his faculties in so many works for the benefit of mankind, and particularly that he achieved the great and admirable Dictionary of our language, we must be astonished at his resolution. The solemn text of “ him to whom much is given, much will be required,” seems to have been ever present to his mind in a rigorous sense, and to have made him dissatisfied with his labours and acts of goodness, however comparatively great ; so that the unavoidable consciousness of his superiority was in that respect a cause of disquiet. He suffered so much from this, and from the gloom which perpetually haunted him, and made solitude frightful, that it may be said

of him, “ If in this life only he had hope, he was of all men most miserable.” He loved praise when it was brought to him ; but was too proud to seek for it. He was somewhat susceptible of flattery. As he was general and unconfined in his studies, he cannot be considered as master of any one particular science ; but he had accumulated a vast and various collection of learning and knowledge, which was so arranged in his mind, as to be ever in readiness to be brought forth. But his superiority over other learned men consisted chiefly in what may be called the art of thinking, the art of using his mind ; a certain continual power of seizing the useful substance of all that he knew, and exhibiting it in a clear and forcible manner ; so that knowledge which we often see to be no better than lumber in men of dull understanding, was in him true, evident, and actual wisdom. His moral precepts are

practical ; for they are drawn from an intimate acquaintance with human nature. His maxims carry conviction ; for they are founded on the basis of common sense. His mind was so full of imagery, that he might have been perpetually a poet ; yet it is remarkable, that however rich his prose is in that respect, the poetical pieces which he wrote were in general not so, but rather strong sentiment and acute observation, conveyed in good verse, particularly in heroic couplets. Though usually grave, and even awful in his deportment, he possessed uncommon and peculiar powers of wit and humour : he frequently indulged himself in colloquial pleasantry ; and the heartiest merriment was often enjoyed in his company ; with this great advantage, that as it was entirely free from any poisonous tincture of vice or impiety, it was salutary to those who shared in it. He had accustomed himself to such accuracy in his com-

mon conversation, that he at all times delivered himself with a force, choice, and elegance of expression, the effect of which was aided by his having a loud voice, and a slow and deliberate utterance. He united a most logical head with a most fertile imagination, which gave him an extraordinary advantage in arguing; for he could reason close or wide, as he saw best for the moment. Exulting in his intellectual strength and dexterity, he could, when he pleased, be the greatest sophist that ever contended in the lists of declamation; and from a spirit of contradiction, and a delight in showing his powers, he would often maintain the wrong side with equal warmth and ingenuity: so that when there was an audience, his real opinions could seldom be gathered from his talk; though when he was in company with a single friend, he would discuss a subject with genuine fairness. But he was too conscientious to make

error permanent and pernicious, by deliberately writing it; and in all his numerous works, he earnestly inculcated what appeared to him to be the truth. His piety was constant, and was the ruling principle of all his conduct; and the more we consider his character, we shall be the more disposed to regard him with admiration and reverence."

His character, as given by Mrs. Piozzi in her "Anecdotes," is drawn with spirit and propriety, though somewhat less favourably.

"His stature was remarkably high, and his limbs exceedingly large: his strength was more than common, I believe, and his activity had been greater, I have heard, than such a form gave one reason to expect: his features were strongly marked, and his countenance particularly rugged; though the original complexion had certainly been fair, a circumstance somewhat unusual, his sight

was near, and otherwise imperfect ; yet his eyes, though of a light-gray colour, were so wild, so piercing, and at times so fierce, that fear was, I believe, the first emotion in the hearts of all his beholders. His mind was so comprehensive, that no language but that he used could have expressed its contents ; and so ponderous was his language, that sentiments less lofty and less solid than his were, would have been encumbered, not adorned by it.

“ Mr. Johnson was not intentionally, however, a pompous converfer : and though he was accused of using big words, as they are called, it was only when little ones could not express his meaning as clearly, or when, perhaps, the elevation of the thought would have been disgraced by a dress less superb. He used to say, “ that the size of a man’s understanding might always be justly measured by his mirth ;” and his own was never contemptible. He would laugh at a

stroke of genuine humour, or sudden fall of odd absurdity, as heartily and freely as I ever yet saw any man ; and though the jest was often such as few felt besides himself, yet his laugh was irresistible, and was observed immediately to produce that of the company, not merely from the notion that it was proper to laugh when he did, but purely out of want of power to forbear it. He was no enemy to splendour of apparel, or pomp of equipage. “ Life,” he would say, “ is barren enough, surely, with all her trappings; let us therefore be cautious how we strip her.”

“ Of Mr. Johnson’s erudition the world has been the judge; and we who produce each a score of his sayings, as proofs of that wit which in him was inexhaustible, resemble travellers, who, having visited Delhi or Golconda, bring home each a handful of oriental pearl, to evince the riches of the Great Mogul.

“ As his purse was ever open to almsgiving, so was his heart tender to those who wanted relief, and his soul susceptible of gratitude, and of every kind impression; yet, though he had refined his sensibility, he had not endangered his quiet, by encouraging in himself a solicitude about trifles, which he treated with the contempt they deserve.

“ Mr. Johnson had a roughness in his manner, which subdued the saucy, and terrified the meek: this was, when I knew him, the prominent part of a character which few durst venture to approach so nearly, and which was for that reason in many respects grossly and frequently mistaken; and it was, perhaps, peculiar to him, that the lofty consciousness of his own superiority, which animated his looks, and raised his voice in conversation, cast likewise an impenetrable veil over him when he said nothing. His talk, therefore, had

commonly the complexion of arrogance, his silence of superciliousness. He was, however, seldom inclined to be silent when any moral or literary question was started; and it was on such occasions that, like the sage in *Rasselas*, he spoke, and attention watched his lips; he reasoned, and conviction closed his periods. If poetry was talked of, his quotations were the readiest; and had he not been eminent for more solid and brilliant qualities, mankind would have united to extol his extraordinary memory. His manner of repeating deserves to be described, though, at the same time, it defeats all power of description; but whoever once heard him repeat an ode of Horace, would be long before they could endure to hear it repeated by another.

“ His equity in giving the character of living acquaintance, ought not, undoubtedly, to be omitted in his own, whence partiality and prejudice were totally excluded,

and truth alone presided in his tongue; a steadiness of conduct the more to be commended, as no man had stronger likings or averfions. His veracity was, indeed, from the most trivial to the most solemn occasions, strict, even to severity; he scorned to embellish a story with fictitious circumstances, which (he used to say), took off from its real value. “A story,” says Johnson, “should be a specimen of life and manners; but if the surrounding circumstances are false, as it is no more a representation of reality, it is no longer worthy our attention.”

“For the rest—That beneficence which, during his life, increased the comforts of so many, may, after his death, be, perhaps, ungratefully forgotten; but that piety which dictated the serious papers in the *Rambler*, will be for ever remembered, for ever, I think, revered. That ample repository of religious truth, moral wisdom, and accu-

rate criticism, breathes, indeed, the genuine emanations of its great author's mind, expressed, too, in a style so natural to him, and so much like his common mode of conversing, that I was myself but little astonished, when he told me that he had scarcely read over one of those inimitable essays before they went to the press.

“ I will add one or two peculiarities more : Though at an immeasurable distance from content in the contemplation of his own uncouth form and figure, he did not like another man much the less for being a coxcomb. Though a man of obscure birth himself, his partiality to people of family was visible on every occasion ; his zeal for subordination warm even to bigotry ; his hatred to innovation, and reverence for the old feudal times, apparent, whenever any possible manner of showing them occurred. I have spoken of his piety, his charity, and his truth, the enlargement of

his heart, and the delicacy of his sentiments; and when I search for shadow to my portrait, none can I find but what was formed by pride, differently modified as different occasions showed it; yet never was pride so purified as Johnson's, at once from meanness and from vanity. The mind of this man was, indeed, expanded beyond the common limits of human nature, and stored with such variety of knowledge, that I used to think it resembled a royal pleasure-ground, where every plant, of every name and nation, flourished in the full perfection of their powers, and where, though lofty woods and falling cataracts first caught the eye, and fixed the earliest attention of beholders, yet neither the trim parterre, nor the pleasing shrubbery, nor even the antiquated evergreens, were denied a place in some fit corner of the happy valley."

His character, as given by Dr. Towers, in his "Essay," appears to have been writ-

ten under no impressions of prepossession or prejudice, and exhibits a very commendable degree of candour, impartiality, and precision.

“ He possessed extraordinary powers of understanding, which were much cultivated by study, and still more by meditation and reflection. His memory was remarkably retentive, his imagination uncommonly vigorous, and his judgment keen and penetrating. He had a strong sense of the importance of religion ; his piety was sincere, and sometimes ardent ; and his zeal for the interests of virtue was often manifested in his conversation and in his writings. The same energy which was displayed in his literary productions, was exhibited also in his conversation, which was various, striking, and instructive ; and, perhaps, no man ever equalled him for nervous and pointed repartees.

“ The great originality which sometimes appeared in his conceptions, and the perspicuity and force with which he delivered them, greatly enhanced the value of his conversation ; and the remarks that he delivered, received additional weight from the strength of his voice, and the solemnity of his manner. He was conscious of his own superiority ; and when in company with literary men, or with those with whom there was any possibility of rivalry or competition, this consciousness was too apparent. With inferiors, and those who readily admitted all his claims, he was often mild and agreeable ; but to others, such was often the arrogance of his manners, that the endurance of it required no ordinary degree of patience. He was very dexterous at argumentation ; and when his reasonings were not solid, they were at least artful and plausible. His retorts were so powerful, that his friends and acquaint-

ance were generally cautious of entering the lists against him ; and the ready acquiescence of those with whom he associated, in his opinions and assertions, probably rendered him more dogmatic than he might otherwise have been. With those, however, with whom he lived, and with whom he was familiar, he was sometimes cheerful and sprightly, and sometimes indulged himself in fallies of wit and pleasantry. He spent much of his time, especially his latter years, in conversation, and seems to have had such an aversion to being left without company, as was sometimes extraordinary in a man possessed of such intellectual powers, and whose understanding had been so highly cultivated.

“ He sometimes discovered much impetuosity of temper, and was too ready to take offence at others ; but when concessions were made, he was easily appeased. For those from whom he had received kind-

ness in the earlier part of his life, he seemed ever to retain a particular regard, and manifested much gratitude towards those by whom he had at any time been benefited. He was soon offended with pertness or ignorance ; but he sometimes seemed to be conscious of having answered the questions of others with too much roughness, and was then desirous to discover more gentleness of temper, and to communicate information with more suavity of manners. When not under the influence of personal pique, of pride, or of religious or political prejudices, he seems to have had great ardour of benevolence ; and, on some occasions, he gave signal proofs of generosity and humanity.

“ He was naturally melancholy, and his views of human life appear to have been habitually gloomy. This appears from his *Rasselas*, and in many passages of his writings. It was also a striking part of the cha-

racter of Johnson, that with powers of mind that did honour to human nature, he had weakneſſes and prejudices that ſeemed ſuited only to the loweſt of the ſpecies. His piety was ſtrongly tinctured with ſuperſtition; and we are aſtoniſhed to find the author of the *Rambler* expreſſing ſerious concern, becauſe he had put milk into his tea on a Good-Friday. His cuſtom of praying for the dead, though unsupported by reaſon or by Scripture, was a leſs irrational ſuperſtition. Indeed, one of the great features of Johnson's character, was a degree of bigotry, both in politics and in religion, which is now ſeldom to be met with in perſons of a cultivated underſtanding. Few other men could have been found in the preſent age, whoſe political bigotry would have led them to ſtyle the celebrated John Hampden "the zealot of rebellion;" and the religious bigotry of the man, who, when at Edinburgh, would not go to hear

Dr. Robertson preach, because he would not be present at a Presbyterian assembly, is not easily to be paralleled in this age and in this country. His habitual incredulity with respect to facts, of which there was no reasonable ground for doubt, as stated by Mrs. Piozzi, and which was remarked by Hogarth, was also a singular trait in his character, and especially when contrary to his superstitious credulity on other occasions. To the close of life he was not only occupied in forming schemes of religious reformation; but, even to a very late period of it, he seems to have been solicitous to apply himself to study with renewed diligence and vigour. It is remarkable, that in his sixty-fourth year, he attempted to learn the low Dutch language; and in his sixty-seventh year he made a resolution to apply himself vigorously to study, particularly the Greek and Italian tongues.

“ The faults and the foibles of Johnson, whatever they were, are now descended with him to the grave; but his virtues should be the object of our imitation. His works, with all their defects, are a most valuable and important accession to the literature of England. His political writings will probably be little read on any other account, than for the dignity and energy of his style; but his Dictionary, his Moral Essays, and his productions in polite literature, will convey useful instruction and elegant entertainment, as long as the language in which they are written shall be understood, and give him a just claim to a distinguished rank among the best and ablest writers that England has produced.”

The estimate of his literary character given by Mr. Murphy in his “ Essay,” is, with a very few exceptions, fair, candid, and just. He sometimes admits his errors, and sometimes endeavours to apologize for

them. His comparison between Johnson and Addison is excellent; and, though long, is of too much value to be withheld.

“ Like Milton and Addison, Dr. Johnson seems to have been fond of his Latin poetry. Those compositions show that he was an early scholar; but his verses have not the graceful ease that gave so much suavity to the poems of Addison. The translation of the Messiah labours under two disadvantages; it is first to be compared with Pope’s inimitable performance, and afterwards with the *Pollio* of Virgil. It may appear trifling to remark, that he has made the letter *o*, in the word *Virgo*, long and short in the same line; *Virgo, Virgo parit*. But the translation has great merit, and some admirable lines. In the *Odes* there is a sweet flexibility, particularly *To his Worthy Friend Dr. Laurence, on Himself at the Theatre, March 8. 1771*, the *Ode* in

the Isle of Sky, and that to *Mrs. Thrale*, from the same place.

“ His English poetry is such as leaves room to think, if he had devoted himself to the Muses, that he would have been the rival of Pope. His first production in this kind was *London*, a poem, in imitation of the third satire of Juvenal. The vices of the metropolis are placed in the room of ancient manners. The author had heated his mind with the ardour of Juvenal; and, having the skill to polish his numbers, he became a sharp accuser of the times. The *Vanity of Human Wishes* is an imitation of the tenth satire of the same author. Though it is translated by Dryden, Johnson's imitation approaches nearest to the spirit of the original.

“ What Johnson has said of the Tragedy of Cato, may be applied to, *Irene*: “ It is rather a poem in dialogue than a drama; rather a succession of just sentiments in ele-

gant language, than a representation of natural affections. Nothing excites or assuages emotion. The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow. Of the agents we have no care; we consider not what they are doing, nor what they are suffering; we wish only to know what they have to say. It is unaffecting elegance, and chill philosophy.

“The prologue to *Irene* is written with elegance, and, in a peculiar strain, shows the literary pride and lofty spirit of the author. The epilogue, we are told in a late publication, was written by Sir William Yonge. This is a new discovery, but by no means probable. When the appendages to a dramatic performance are not assigned to a friend, or an unknown hand, or a person of fashion, they are always supposed to be written by the author of the play. It is to be wished, however, that the

epilogue in question could be transferred to any other writer. It is the worst *Jeu d'Esprit* that ever fell from Johnson's pen.

“ Of his *Miscellaneous Tracts* and *Philological Dissertations*, it will suffice to say, they are the productions of a man who never wanted decorations of language, and always taught his reader to think. The *Life of the late King of Prussia*, as far as it extends, is a model of the biographical style. The *review* of the “ Origin of Evil,” was, perhaps, written with asperity; but the angry epitaph, which it provoked from Soame Jenyns, was an ill-timed resentment, unworthy of the genius of that amiable author.

“ The *Rambler* may be considered as Johnson's great work. It was the basis of that high reputation which went on increasing to the end of his days. In this collection, Johnson is the great moral teacher of his countrymen; his essays form a body of ethics; the observations on life and man-

ners are acute and instructive ; and the papers, professedly critical, serve to promote the cause of literature. It must, however, be acknowledged, that a settled gloom hangs over the author's mind ; and all the essays, except eight or ten, coming from the same fountain-head, no wonder that they have the raciness of the soil from which they sprung. Of this uniformity Johnson was sensible. He used to say, that if he had joined a friend or two, who would have been able to intermix papers of a sprightly turn, the collection would have been more miscellaneous, and by consequence, more agreeable to the generality of readers.

“ It is remarkable that the pomp of diction, which has been objected to Johnson, was first assumed in the *Rambler*. His *Dictionary* was going on at the same time ; and in the course of that work, as he grew familiar with technical and scholastic words, he thought that the bulk of his readers

were equally learned, or at least would admire the splendour and dignity of the style. And yet it is well known, that he praised in Cowley the ease and unaffected structure of the sentences. Cowley may be placed at the head of those who cultivated a clear and natural style. Dryden, Tillotson, and Sir William Temple followed. Addison, Swift, and Pope, with more correctness, carried our language well nigh to perfection. Of Addison, Johnson was used to say, he is the Raphael of essay writers. How he differed so widely from such elegant models, is a problem not to be solved, unless it be true that he took an early tincture from the writers of the last century, particularly Sir Thomas Brown.—Hence the peculiarities of his style, new combinations, sentences of an unusual structure, and words derived from the learned languages. His own account of the matter is, “when common words were less pleasing to the ear,

or less distinct in their signification, I familiarized the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas." But he forgot the observation of Dryden: *If too many foreign words are poured in upon us, it looks as if they were designed, not to assist the natives, but to conquer them.* There is, it must be admitted, a swell of language, often out of all proportion to the sentiment; but there is, in general, a fulness of mind, and the thought seems to expand with the sound of the words. Determined to discard colloquial barbarisms and licentious idioms, he forgot the elegant simplicity that distinguishes the writings of Addison. He had what Locke calls a round-about view of his subject; and, though he was never tainted like many modern wits, with the ambition of shining in the paradox, he may be fairly called an *original thinker*. His reading was extensive. He treasured in his mind whatever was worthy of notice; but

he added to it from his own meditation. He collected, *quæ reconderet, ætæque promeret.* Addison was not so profound a thinker. He was born to write, converse, and live with ease; and he found an early patron in Lord Somers. He depended, however, more upon a fine taste, than the vigour of his mind. His Latin poetry shows, that he relished, with a just selection, all the refined and delicate beauties of the Roman classics; and when he cultivated his native language, no wonder that he formed that graceful style, which has been so justly admired; simple, yet elegant; adorned, yet never over-wrought; rich in illusion, yet pure and perspicuous; correct, without labour; and, though sometimes deficient in strength, yet always musical. His essays, in general, are on the surface of life; if ever original, it was in pieces of humour. Sir Roger de Coverly, and the Tory Fox-hunter, need not be mentioned.

Johnson had a fund of humour, but he did not know it; nor was he willing to descend to the familiar idiom, and the variety of diction which that mode of composition required. The letter, in the *Rambler*, No. 12. from a young girl that wants a place, will illustrate this observation. Addison possessed an unclouded imagination, alive to the first objects of nature and of art. He reaches the sublime without any apparent effort. When he tells us, “if we consider the fixed stars as so many oceans of flame, that are each of them attended with a different set of planets; if we still discover new firmaments and new lights, that are sunk further in those unfathomable depths of æther, we are lost in a labyrinth of suns and worlds, and confounded with the magnificence and immensity of nature;” he ease with which this passage rises to an unaffected grandeur, is the secret charm that captivates the reader. Johnson is always

lofty ; he seems to use Dryden's phrase, to be o'er inform'd with meaning, and his words do not appear to himself adequate to his conception. He moves in state, and his periods are always harmonious. His *Oriental Tales* are in the true style of eastern magnificence, and yet none of them are so much admired as the visions of Mirza. In matters of criticism, Johnson is never the echo of preceding writers. He thinks and decides for himself. If we except the *Essays on the pleasures of imagination*, Addison cannot be called a philosophical critic. His moral *Essays* are beautiful ; but in that province nothing can exceed the *Rambler* ; though Johnson used to say, that the essay on the burdens of mankind (in the *Spectator*, No. 558) was the most exquisite he had ever read. Talking of himself, Johnson said, " Topham Beauclerk has wit, and every thing comes from him

with ease ; but when I say a good thing, I seem to labour." When we compare him with Addison, the contrast is still stronger. Addison lends grace and ornament to truth ; Johnson gives it force and energy. Addison makes virtue amiable ; Johnson represents it as an awful duty. Addison insinuates himself with an air of modesty ; Johnson commands like a dictator ; but a dictator in his splendid robes, not labouring at his plough. Addison is the Jupiter of Virgil, with placid serenity talking to Venus :

" Vultu, quo cœlum tempestateſque ſerenat."

Johnson is *Jupiter tonans* : he darts his lightning, and rolls his thunder, in the cause of virtue and piety. The language seems to fall ſhort of his ideas ; he pours along, familiarizing the terms of philoſophy with bold inverſions and ſonorous periods ; but we may apply to him what

Pope has said of Homer: "It is the sentiment that swells and fills out the diction, which rises with it, and forms itself about it; like glass in the furnace, which grows to a greater magnitude, as the breath within is more powerful, and the heat more intense."

"The essays written by Johnson in the "Adventurer," may be called a continuation of the *Rambler*. The *Idler*, in order to be consistent with the assumed character, is written with abated vigour, in a style of ease and unlaboured elegance. It is the *Odyssey* after the *Iliad*. Intense thinking would not become the *Idler*. The first number presents a well-drawn portrait of an idler; and from that character no deviation could be made. Accordingly Johnson forgets his austere manner, and plays us into sense. He still continues his lectures on human life; but he adverts to common occurrences, and is often content

with the topic of the day. This account of the *Idler* may be closed, after observing, that the author's mother being buried on the 23d of January 1759, there is an admirable paper, occasioned by that event, on Saturday the 27th of the same month, No. 41. The reader, if he pleases, may compare it with another fine paper in the *Rambler*, No. 41, on the conviction that rushes on the mind at the bed of a dying friend.

“*Rasselas*,” says Sir John Hawkins, “is a specimen of our language scarcely to be paralleled; it is written in a style refined to a degree of *immaculate purity*, and displays the whole force of *turgid* eloquence.” One cannot but smile at this encomium. *Rasselas* is undoubtedly both elegant and sublime. It is a view of human life, displayed, it must be owned, in gloomy colours. The author's natural melancholy, depressed at the time by the approaching dissolu-

tion of his mother, darkened the picture. A tale that should keep curiosity awake by the artifice of unexpected incidents, was not the design of a mind pregnant with better things. He who reads the heads of the chapters, will find that it is not a course of adventures that invites him forward, but a discussion of interesting questions; Reflections on Human Life; the History of Imlac, the Man of Learning; a Dissertation upon Poetry; the Character of a Wise and Happy Man, who discourses with energy on the government of the passions, and on a sudden, when death deprives him of his daughter, forgets all his maxims of wisdom, and the eloquence that adorned them, yielding to the stroke of affliction with all the vehemence of the bitterest anguish. It is by pictures of life, and profound moral reflection, that expectation is engaged and gratified throughout the work. The His-

tory of the Mad Astronomer, who imagines that for five years he possessed the regulation of the weather, and that the sun passed from tropic to tropic by his direction, represents, in striking colours, the sad effects of a distempered imagination. It becomes the more affecting, when we recollect that it proceeds from one who lived in fear of the same dreadful visitation; from one, who says emphatically, “Of the uncertainties in our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is the uncertain continuance of reason.” The inquiry into the cause of madness, and the dangerous prevalence of imagination, till in time some particular train of ideas fixes the attention, and the mind recurs constantly to the favourite conception, is carried on in a strain of acute observation; but it leaves us room to think that the author was transcribing from his own apprehensions. The discourse on the nature of the soul gives us

all that philosophy knows ; not without a tincture of superstition. It is remarkable that the vanity of human pursuits was, about the same time, the subject that employed both Johnson and Voltaire ; but *Candide* is the work of a lively imagination, and *Rasselas*, with all its splendour of eloquence, exhibits a gloomy picture.

“ The *Dictionary*, though in some instances abuse has been loud, and in others malice has endeavoured to undetermine its fame, still remains the *Mount Atlas* of English literature.

Though storms and tempests thunder on its brow,
And oceans break their billows at its feet,
It stands unmov'd, and glories in its height.

“ That Johnson was eminently qualified for the office of a commentator on *Shakespeare*, no man can doubt ; but it was an office which he never cordially embraced. The public expected more than he had

diligence to perform ; and yet his edition has been the ground on which every subsequent commentator has chose to build. The general observations at the end of the several plays, with great elegance and precision, give a summary view of each drama. The preface is a tract of great erudition and philosophical criticism.

“ Johnson’s *political pamphlets*, whatever was his motive for writing them, whether gratitude for his pension, or the solicitation of men in power, did not support the cause for which they were undertaken. They are written in a style truly harmonious, and with his usual dignity of language. When it is said that he advanced positions repugnant to *the common rights of mankind*, the virulence of party may be suspected. It is, perhaps, true, that in the clamour raised throughout the kingdom, Johnson over-heated his mind ; but he was a friend to the rights of man, and he was

greatly superior to the littleness of spirit that might incline him to advance what he did not think and firmly believe.

“The account of his *Journey to the Hebrides* or Western Isles of Scotland, is a model for such as shall hereafter relate their travels. The author did not visit that part of the world in the character of an antiquary, to amuse us with wonders taken from the dark and fabulous ages; nor as a mathematician, to measure a degree, and settle the longitude and latitude of the several islands. Those who expected such information, expected what was never intended.

In every work regard the writer's end.

Johnson went to see men and manners, modes of life, and the progress of civilization. His remarks are so artfully blended with the rapidity and elegance of his narrative, that the reader is inclined to wish,

as Johnson did with regard to Gray, that *to travel, and to tell his travels, had been more of his employment.*

“ We come now to the *Lives of the Poets*, a work undertaken at the age of seventy, yet the most brilliant, and certainly the most popular of all our author's writings. For this performance he needed little preparation. Attentive always to the history of letters, and by his own natural bias fond of biography, he was the more willing to embrace the proposition of the bookfellers. He was versed in the whole body of the English poetry, and his rules of criticism were settled with precision. The facts are related upon the best intelligence, and the best vouchers that could be gleaned, after a great lapse of time. Probability was to be inferred from such materials as could be procured, and no man better understood the nature of historical evidence than Johnson; no man was

more religiously an observer of truth. If his history is any where defective, it must be imputed to the want of better information, and the errors of uncertain tradition.

Ad nos vix tenuis famæ prelabitur aura.

“If the strictures on the works of the various authors are not always satisfactory, and if erroneous criticism may sometimes be suspected, who can hope, that, in matters of taste, all shall agree? The instances in which the public mind has differed from the positions advanced by the author, are few in number. It has been said, that justice has not been done to Swift; that Gay and Prior are undervalued; and that Gray has been harshly treated. This charge, perhaps, ought not to be disputed. Johnson, it is well known, had conceived a prejudice against Swift. His friends trembled for him when he was

writing that life, but were pleased, at last, to see it executed with temper and moderation. As to Prior, it is probable that he gave his real opinion; but an opinion that will not be adopted by men of lively fancy. With regard to Gray, when he condemns the apostrophe, in which Father Thames is desired to tell who drives the hoop or tosses the ball, and then adds, that Father Thames had no better means of knowing than himself; when he compares the abrupt beginning of the first stanza of the "Bard" to the ballad of "Johnny Armstrong," "*Is there ever a man in all Scotland;*" there are, perhaps, few friends of Johnson, who would not wish to blot out both the passages."

The following quotation from Horace is given by Mr. Murphy, as containing Johnson's picture in miniature.

"Iracundior est paulo minus aptus acutis
Naribus horum hominum, rideri possit, eo quid

Rusticius tonso toga defluit, et male laxus
 In pede calceus hæret. At est bonus, ut melior vir
 Non alius quisquam; at tibi amicus, at ingenium ingens
 Inculto latet hoc sub corpore."————

His moral and literary character has been delineated by Miss Seward the poetess of Litchfield, in the "European Magazine" for 1785, with equal accuracy of discrimination and strength of colouring.

"Dr. Johnson's learning and knowledge were deep and universal. His conception was so clear, and his intellectual stores were marshalled with such precision, that his style in common conversation equalled that of his moral essays. Whatever charge of pedantic stiffness may have been brought against those essays, by prejudice, or by personal resentment, they are certainly not less superior to all other English compositions of that sort, in the happy fertility and efflorescence of imagination, harmony of period, and luminous arrange-

ment of ideas, than they are in strength of expression, and force of argument. His Latinisms, for which he has been much censured, have extended the limits of our native dialect, besides enriching its sounds with that sonorous sweetness, which the intermixture of words from a more harmonious language must necessarily produce; I mean in general, for it cannot be denied that they sometimes deform the Johnsonian page, though they much oftener adorn it. His *London* is a very brilliant and nervous satiric poem, and his *Vanity of Human Wishes* appears to me a much finer satire than the best of Pope's. Perhaps its poetic beauty is not excelled by any composition in heroic rhyme which this country can boast, rich as she is in that species of writing. As a moralist, Dr. Johnson was respectable, splendid, sublime; but as a critic, the faults of his disposition have disgraced much of his fine

writings with frequent paradox, unprincipled misrepresentation, mean and needless exposure of bodily infirmities (as in the life of Pope), irreconcilable contradictions, and with decisions of the last absurdity. Dr. Johnson had strong affections where literary envy did not interfere; but that envy was of such deadly potency, as to load his conversation, as it has loaded his biographic works, with the rancour of party violence, with national aversion, bitter sarcasm, and unchristian-like invective. It is in vain to descant upon the improbability that Dr. Johnson, under the consciousness of abilities so great, and of a fame so extensive, should envy any man, since it is more than improbable, it is wholly impossible, that an imagination so sublime, and a judgment so correct, on all abstract subjects, should decide as he has decided upon the works of *some* who were at least his equals, and

upon *one* who is yet greater than himself. Dr. Johnson was a furious Jacobite, while one hope for the Stuart line remained ; and his politics, always leaning towards despotism, were inimical to liberty, and the natural rights of mankind. He was punctual in his devotions ; but his religious faith had much more of bigot-fierceness than of that gentleness which the gospel inculcates. To those who had never entered the literary confines, or, entering them, had paid him the tribute of unbounded praise and total subjection, he was an affectionate and generous friend, soothing in his behaviour to them, and active in promoting their domestic comforts ; though, in some spleenful moments, he could not help speaking disrespectfully both of their mental powers and of their virtues. His pride was infinite ; yet, amidst all the overbearing arrogance it produced, his heart melted at the sight or at the representation of disease and po-

verty ; and, in the hours of affluence, his
 purse was ever open to relieve them. In
 several instances, his affections seemed un-
 accountably engaged by people of whose
 disposition and abilities he scrupled not to
 speak contemptuously at all times, and in
 all humours. To such he often devoted,
 and especially of late years, *a large por-*
tion of that time which might naturally
 be supposed to have been precious to him,
 who so well knew how to employ it.
 When his attention was called to modern
 writings, particularly if they were cele-
 brated, and not written by any of his
 “ little senate,” he generally listened with
 angry impatience. “ No, Sir, I shall not
 read the book,” was his common reply.
 He turned from the compositions of rising
 genius with a visible horror, which too
 plainly proved, that envy was the bosom
 serpent of this literary despot, whose life
 had been unpolluted by licentious crimes,

and who had some great and noble qualities, accompanying a stupendous reach of understanding."

His character, as a poetical biographer, has been given by his townsman Dr. Newton, in his posthumous work, not perhaps with his powers, but with his decision and severity of censure.

" Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* afford much amusement, but candour was hurt and offended at the malevolence that preponderated in every part. Never was any biographer more sparing of his praises, or more abundant in his censures. He delights more in exposing blemishes, than in recommending beauties; slightly passes over excellencies; enlarges upon imperfections; and, not content with his own severe reflections, revives old scandal, and produces large quotations from the long-forgotten works of former critics. The panegyrist of Savage in his youth, may, in his old age, •

become the satirist of the most favoured authors, his encomium as unjust and undeserved as his censures."

The testimony of the classical editor of Milton may be compared with the eulogy pronounced by Dr. Parr, the learned and eloquent editor of "Bellendenus," in his edition of "Tracts by Warburton and a Warburtonian."

"Of literary merit, Johnson, as we all know, was a sagacious but a most severe judge. Such was his discernment, that he pierced into the most secret springs of human actions; and such was his integrity, that he always weighed the moral characters of his fellow creatures in "the balance of the sanctuary."

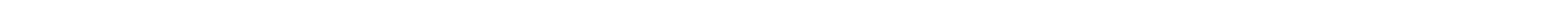
His peculiarities and foibles are painted in strong colours by Mr. Courtenay, in his "Poetical Review;" but, in return, his virtues and abilities are candidly acknowledged, and placed in their proper light. Hav-

ing alternately commended his merits, and censured his faults, he sums up the whole in the following lines, which strongly mark the character of his work.

“ Thus sings the muse, to Johnson’s mem’ry just,
And scatters praise and censure o’er his dust ;
For, through each chequer’d scene a contrast ran,
Too sad a proof, how great, how weak is man !
Though o’er his passions conscience held the rein,
He shook at dismal phantoms of the brain ;
A boundless faith that noble mind debas’d,
By piercing wit, energetic reason grac’d :
Ev’n shades like these, to brilliancy allied,
May comfort fools, and curb the sage’s pride ;
Yet learning’s sons, who o’er his foibles mourn,
To latest time shall fondly view his urn ;
And, wond’ring, praise, to human frailties blind,
Talents and virtues of the brightest kind.
The sculptur’d trophy and imperial bust,
That proudly rise around his hallow’d dust,
Shall mould’ring fall, by time’s slow hand decay’d ;
But the bright meed of virtue ne’er shall fade.
Exulting genius stamps his sacred name,
Enroll’d for ever in the dome of fame.”

F I N I S.





Anderson, Robert

The life of Samuel Johnson LL. D with critical observations on his works

London 1795

Biogr. 561 eu

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